

THE Atlantic

SEPTEMBER 2004

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BABY PICTURES, OFFICE RIVALRIES
—AND THE PATH TO 9/11

BY ALAN CULLISON



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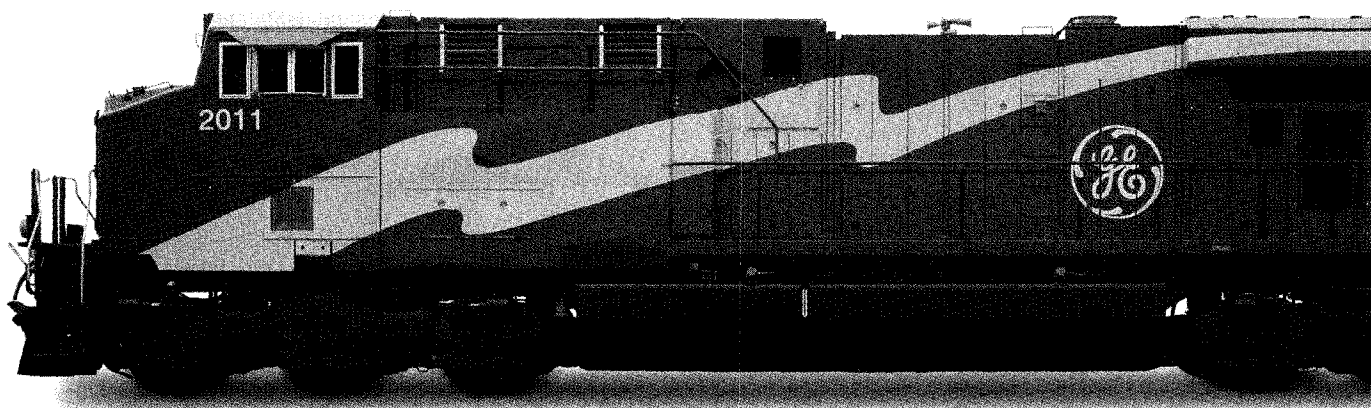
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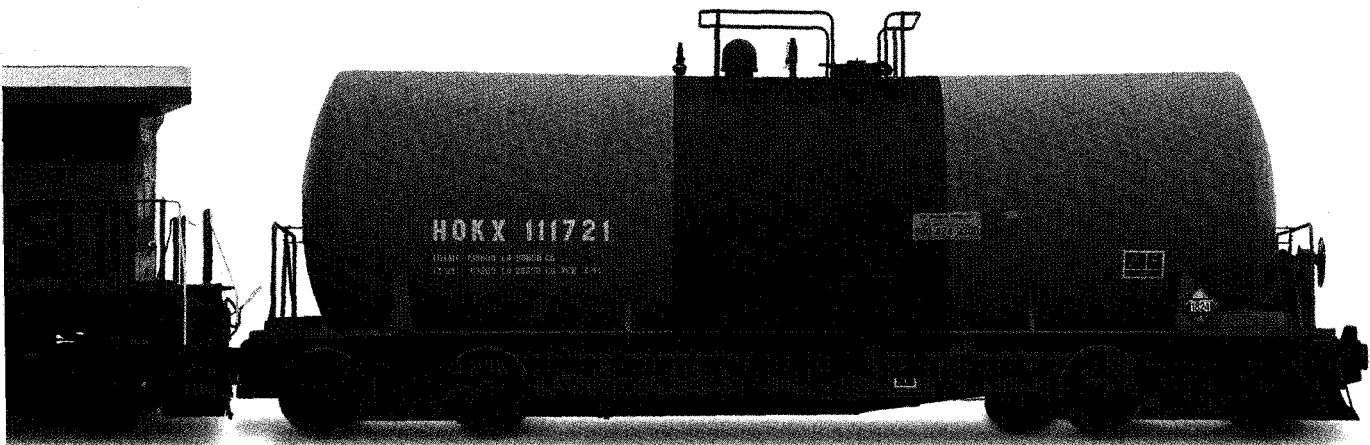
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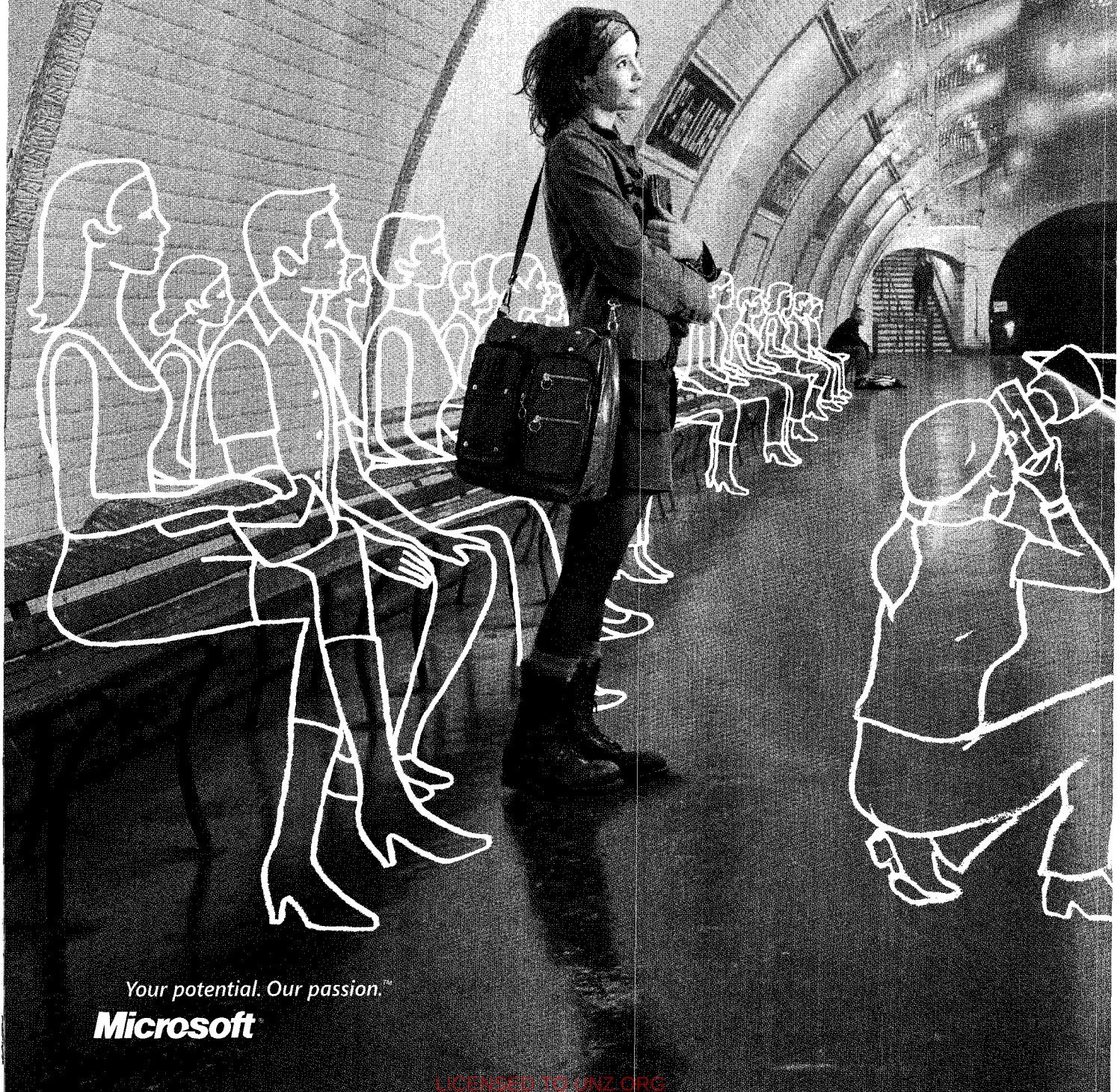
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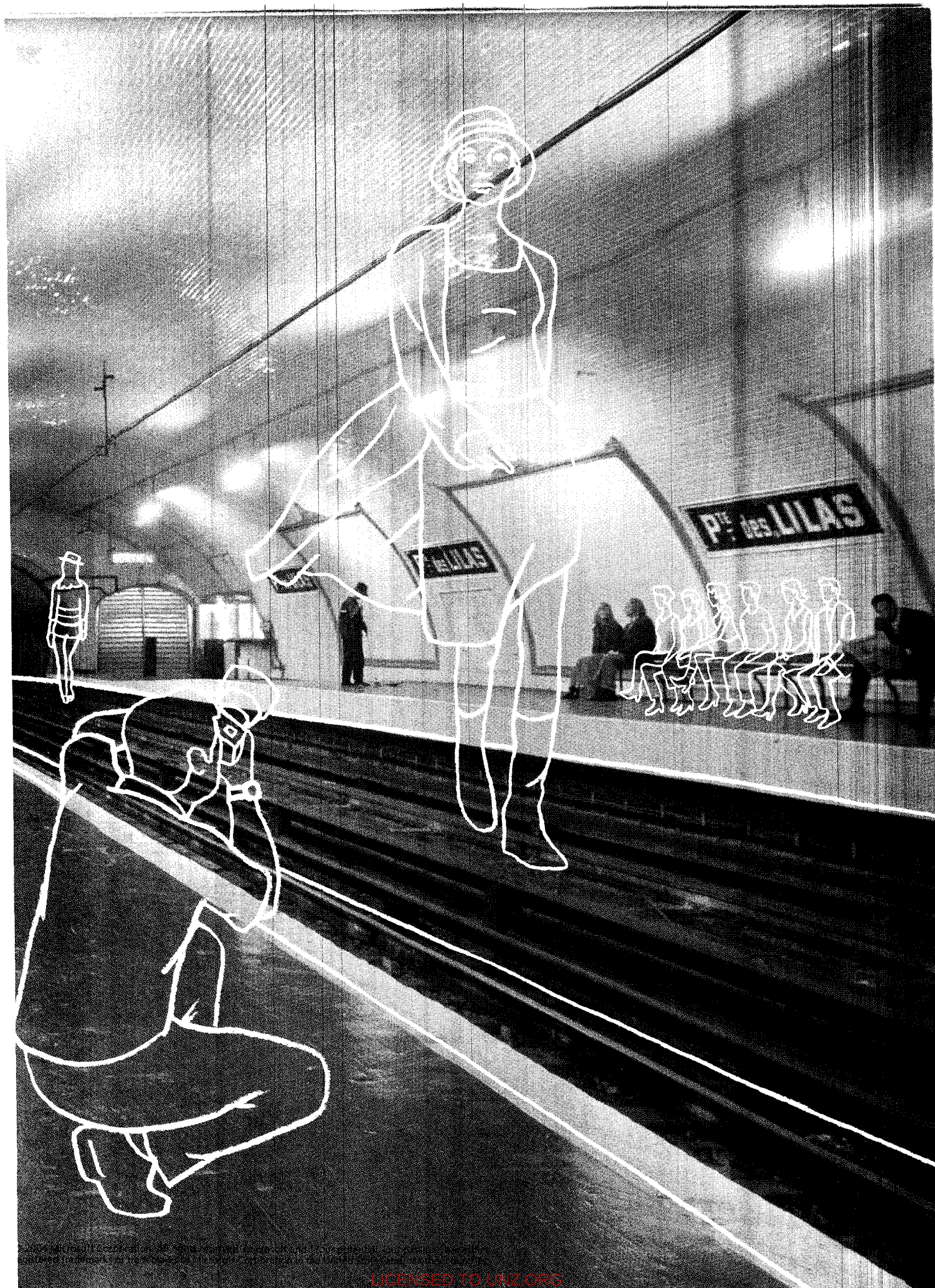


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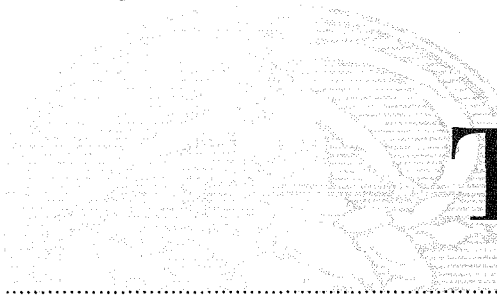


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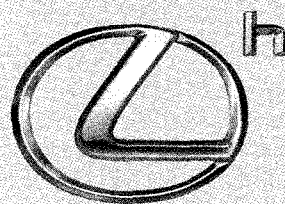
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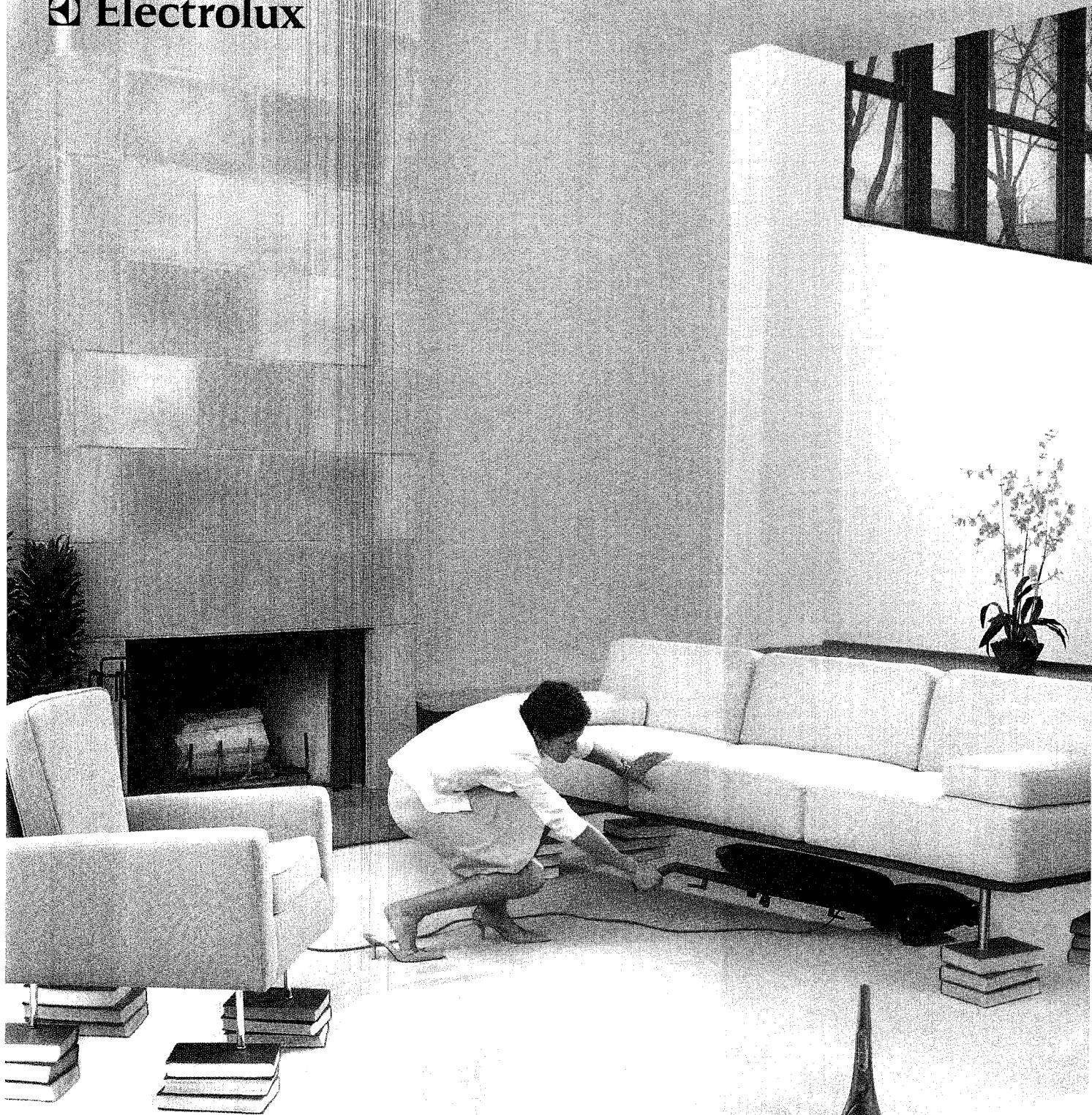
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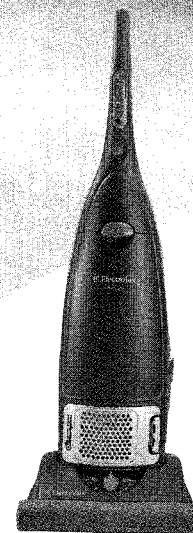
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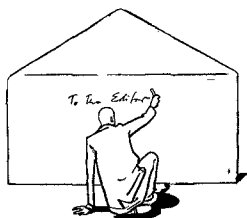
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tragedy of Tony Blair

In "The Tragedy of Tony Blair" (June *Atlantic*), Geoffrey Wheatcroft's reference to David Trimble's backside hanging out a window because Tony Blair refused to punish Sinn Fein for IRA violence beggars belief. What planet is Wheatcroft writing from?

What (Provisional) IRA violence? Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA are in full compliance with the Belfast Agreement. The PIRA guns are completely silent, and have been for years. Trimble, the Ulster (sic) Unionists, Tony Blair, and the British government have violated the Belfast Agreement ad nauseam, and loyalist violence, complete with British army and police collusion, carries on without mention.

Whether Trimble ever intended to honor the spirit and the letter of the Belfast Agreement only he will know; but after pocketing the Nobel Peace Prize money, he found the intransigence within his own party too hard to take, and Blair has had to save Trimble's neck—sorry, backside—time and again, with completely illegal suspensions of and modifications to the Belfast Agreement. The men within the Ulster Unionists (and the Democratic Unionists) who are determined to destroy the Belfast Agreement include some of the very men who ordered the RUC, the B-Specials, and the Orange mobs to attack the Irish in 1969 for daring to ask for the right to fair elections and a fair allocation of jobs and housing—thus starting this latest violent episode in the British occupation of Ireland.

John Scarry
Auckland, New Zealand

Geoffrey Wheatcroft thinks that Tony Blair's support for the invasion of Iraq was the culmination of his moral disintegration. But that's in fact what convinced me that Blair is the great-

est moral leader of our time. It would have been the easiest thing in the world for him to follow the majority of his party, his country, and the world in opposing the war. And he would have been widely praised for high courage in standing up against the United States. But Blair saw with Churchillian clarity that after 9/11 the world was changed, and that in an era of weapons of mass destruction and global terrorist networks we cannot tolerate the risk of a despot with the clear means and motivation to create such weapons and support terrorism. Blair saw early that a war to remove Saddam, if not inevitable, was highly probable, and should be prudently prepared for. And when the war seemed necessary, he bravely and indefatigably persuaded his country to join in the heroic venture.

Was the war on Iraq prudent? I think it's too soon to tell. Success is not yet assured—but neither is failure. Was the war just? I say there can be no doubt that it was. Saddam's weapons program may have been less advanced than almost any expert thought, but his human-rights abuses were worse than most people thought. Three hundred thousand corpses in sandy mass graves cry out that the war was just.

Roger Burk
Wallkill, N.Y.

What Geoffrey Wheatcroft actually described, in an agonizingly pseudo-analytical and patronizing intellectual style, was the heroics of Tony Blair. He put Blair's warts, as he saw them, under a microscope, and then magnified them in his story, but managed to put Blair's strengths and the light he has shown to Britain and the world under a bushel basket. In essence Wheatcroft's article proclaims that the British people on the whole prefer isolationism, so that they can tend their gardens in peace; and Wheatcroft, perhaps unwittingly, endorses this irresponsible posture.

He also gave us a picture, backhandedly, of a Prime Minister who recognized his duty to support the United States in the beginning of a titanic struggle to overcome a worldwide threat—already implemented on 9/11—with horrific potential.

There is much more to say on this subject, and on the subtly meanspirited aspect of Wheatcroft's article (not to mention his spineless posturing as an arbiter between good and evil). However, I will leave you with my most vivid thought, while examining the man behind his rhetoric: that Blair's performance resembles that of Abraham Lincoln during the difficult and personally painful days of 1864, prior to his re-election.

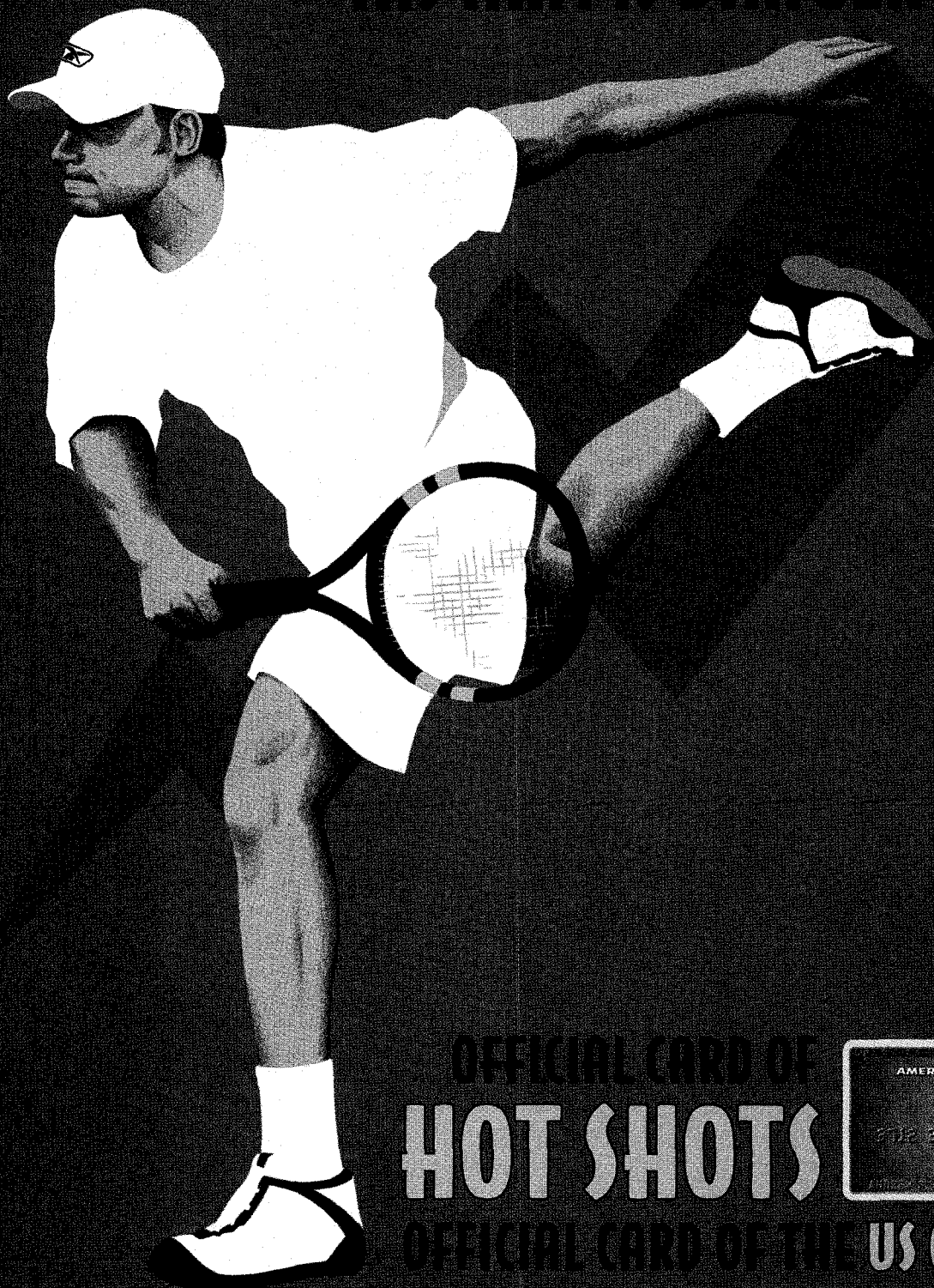
People who make decisions that are necessarily unpopular in the short term but bring about lasting change in the world for the better can only be shown by history to be the true, and too few, heroes.

Thomas J. Ryan
Bethany Beach, Del.

In his floppy attempt at character assassination of Tony Blair, Geoffrey Wheatcroft misrepresents the pivotal error of the BBC reporter Andrew Gilligan. Gilligan's infamous report on the BBC didn't merely say that the British government had "exaggerated the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's supposed weapons of mass destruction," as Wheatcroft claims. Gilligan accused the government of having deliberately "sexed up" intelligence with information it knew to be false. That is entirely different from a benign clumsiness of expression, which, Wheatcroft tells his readers, is all that the BBC report could be accused of. Wheatcroft's disregard of the point of the whole affair becomes parodic when he subsequently asserts that the BBC report "was in itself an elementary statement of fact." Not even the BBC today shares that point of view.

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Wheatcroft also has his own exotic version of events regarding the government's alleged determination to "out" Andrew Gilligan's secret source, Dr. Kelly. The official and independent investigation into the Kelly affair concluded that there never was any underhanded government strategy to name Dr. Kelly.

*Jeppé Duvå
Copenhagen, Denmark*

I found Geoffrey Wheatcroft's article on Tony Blair quite amusing. Prime Minister Blair had been speaking forcefully against the regime in Iraq for three years before George Bush became President, so it seems improbable that his decision to go to war was "made by someone else [Mr. Bush]." Wheatcroft's ridicule and mock pity for this great statesman (please read Blair's major speeches on international relations since 9/11) remind me of the contempt the left (and right) had for Churchill in the early 1930s. Blair's speech three days before the Madrid bombings was Churchillian in its prescience and wisdom. Of course, events proved Churchill correct in his warnings, and the ridicule evaporated; I await the rehabilitation of Tony Blair. Toward the end of his rather thorough character assassination of Blair, Wheatcroft acknowledges that the Prime Minister will most likely retain his post after the next election, but then informs us that "that could prove just another hollow victory." Fortunately, to quote the author one last time, "in a democracy it's not history [or the media pundits!] but voters who judge the leaders."

*Murray Buttner
Juneau, Alaska*

I was astonished to read Geoffrey Wheatcroft's fevered and irrational anti-Tony Blair and anti-United States rant in *The Atlantic*. There are issues on which I strongly disagree with President Bush and Tony Blair, but Wheatcroft's attack is largely unfounded and scurrilous. He attacks Lord Hutton's report as "perverse" because it did not find Blair at fault. Any unbiased person who read the testimony of the "multitude of witnesses" would reach the same conclusion Lord Hutton did. It was Andrew

Gilligan who "sexed up" his story. It is Wheatcroft who has inflated uncertainties into lies and plots.

Near the end of his tirade he says that Blair "is still a clear favorite" to win re-election. If that happens, I shall watch the obits to see whether Wheatcroft suffers a rage-induced stroke.

*Pamela C. Thompson
Cambria, Calif.*

Geoffrey Wheatcroft replies:

If my essay hasn't convinced readers, I am not going to persuade them now. I shall merely thank them for their interest—with one exception, which should not go uncorrected. John Scarry's little slice of Irish republican propaganda states that "Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA are in full compliance with the Belfast Agreement. The PIRA guns are completely silent, and have been for years."

Since the agreement, in April of 1998, at least eighteen people have been killed by Gerry Adams's colleagues in the Provisional IRA, all but one of them Roman Catholics. Hundreds more have been subjected to "punishment beatings," shot in the legs in the traditional IRA fashion, or driven out of Ulster. There has been a rash of suicides of young men who have been treated in this way in the Catholic areas of Belfast, which are now, thanks to the American-sponsored "peace process," entirely controlled and terrorized by the IRA and other republican groups. Tony Blair's government, supported by Dublin and Washington, has tacitly agreed that the IRA may be regarded as being "on ceasefire" if it refrains from shooting soldiers and policemen, and confines itself merely to mutilating and murdering working-class Catholics. Whatever else David Trimble may be wrong about, I do not think he is wrong to object to this.

Battle for Fallujah

Robert Kaplan makes one serious misstatement in his otherwise fine "Five Days in Fallujah" (July/August *Atlantic*), when he improperly attributes the military's "compassion for innocent civilians" to what he correctly perceives as its predominant strain of evangelical Christianity. Sparing innocents from harm and offering them succor when possible is a

basic moral precept that can be found in virtually every faith and in every ethical system, religious or not, that is worthy of the name. Indeed, it is codified in the deeply agnostic—or at least completely ecumenical—international laws of armed conflict, a primary and avowed purpose of which is the protection of noncombatants. To suggest that "Bible Belt" (Kaplan's characterization) fundamentalists have some special claim to this ancient and universal concept—or even manifest it to some unusual degree in their attitudes or behavior—is not only factually incorrect but insulting to the vast majority of human beings who do not share the evangelicals' particular beliefs but would nonetheless gladly share their canteens, MREs, or first-aid kits with an Iraqi in need.

*David A. Shlapak
Pittsburgh, Pa.*

I am a combat veteran of World War II and have very distant memories of Ernie Pyle's articles for the Scripps-Howard newspapers, articles that may also have appeared at times in the Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes*. Robert Kaplan accomplished three things in his report: He personalized the action in Fallujah by the Marines' "1/5" in the way Ernie Pyle personalized the combat in World War II. He described the nature of the combat in a way that no other descriptive material I have read on the Iraq operation has done. Finally, he demonstrated the power of the pen in comparison to television coverage of military actions in Iraq and elsewhere.

*Larry Sitney
Santa Fe, N. Mex.*

Iwo Jima

PJ. O'Rourke's piece on Iwo Jima ("Sulfur Island," June *Atlantic*) was beautiful: both a tribute to those lost in battles past and an inspiration to those of us who may yet wield power in battles present and future. However, I must correct him regarding the Medal of Honor. I study military conflict, and have never known or heard of a member of the U.S. Armed Services who would regard the award he speaks of as the Congressional Medal

of Honor. Though often called the "Congressional" Medal, the award is actually bestowed on the recipient by the President in the name of Congress. It is no more the Congressional Medal of Honor than it is the Presidential Medal of Honor; it is simply the Medal of Honor.

*Amy J. Williamson
Clear Lake, Iowa*

"Sulfur Island" is pretty good, except for a detail I believe is false and which I very much resent. P. J. O'Rourke writes about the Marines' standing at attention during the Japanese national anthem, and a Marine sergeant major of his generation saying under his breath, "My grandfather would be rolling over in his grave if he saw this."

I was the only Marine sergeant major at the ceremony described, and I'm the only Marine sergeant major who gives tours on Iwo Jima. I doubt that I would say such a thing. My father fought Nazis, and my grandfather never saw action in World War I. I have no anger or bitter-

ness toward the Japanese people. In fact, many of them are my friends.

*M. W. McClure
Okinawa, Japan*

As a longtime admirer and fan of P. J. O'Rourke, it pains me to have to correct him, but it is, as we say, my duty as a former noncommissioned officer.

O'Rourke makes the common error of denoting the plural of "sergeant major" as "sergeant majors." In fact two or more senior NCOs of that rank are "sergeants major." In a similar vein, two or more military trials would be properly referred to as "courts martial," two or more pointy-headed academics as "doctors of philosophy," and two or more John Ashcrofts (God forbid) as "attorneys general."

*Russell Burgos
Thousand Oaks, Calif.*

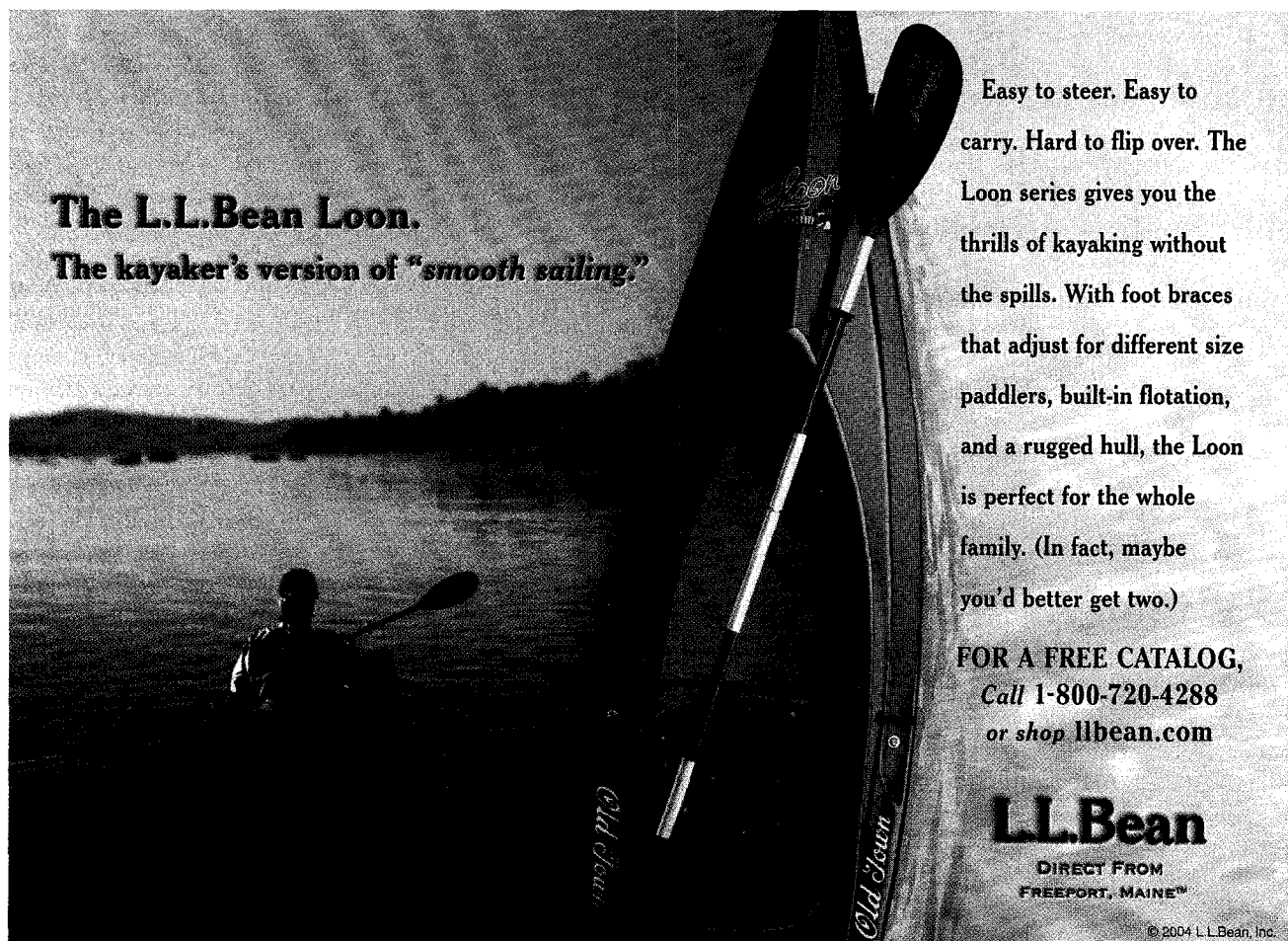
P. J. O'Rourke replies:

I plead guilty (or stupid, as the case may be) to all three charges. But I feel particularly bad about the complaint from

Sergeant Major McClure, who greatly impressed me on Iwo Jima. In matters of military rank and insignia I am ... a civilian. I can't tell a brigadier general from the doorman at the Ritz. I wasn't quoting Sergeant Major McClure, but I can't say who I was quoting. The sergeant (or officer, or whoever it was) who said "spinning in his grave" was on the periphery of my vision, because I, too, was standing at attention and facing the Japanese flag. I have no anger or bitterness toward the Japanese people either, but my father fought them in New Guinea and the Philippines. And I'm afraid that as the Japanese national anthem was being played, I could practically hear Dad's casket whirl.

Dawn of the Daddy State

Paul Starobin ("Dawn of the Daddy State," June *Atlantic*) would put the United States, Russia, and the EU in the same category as Israel, surrounded by terrorist Muslim states all eager for its destruction. He would also trade in



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democracy for a Hobbesian authoritarianism that I—and, I think, most Americans—feel would be an unwelcome anachronism, and not worth the reach back to mid-seventeenth-century England.

What Starobin is missing happened after Hobbes—an Age of Enlightenment, which largely managed to separate religion from the body politic, as France continues to do today in banning Muslim headscarves in its public schools. From there evolved an Age of Revolution, fired by, among others, John Locke, the English philosopher who superseded Hobbes and later so influenced Jefferson. Hobbes, after all, still pontificated under the burden of the divine right of kings, so may be excused for worrying about his head when many about him were losing theirs at their sovereign's pleasure. A royalist during the English Civil War, Hobbes had to make peace with Cromwell in order to return to England from Paris, where he had written *Leviathan*; after the Restoration he sought and received patronage from Charles II despite the fact that other royalists wanted him drawn and quartered for paying homage to Cromwell.

Locke, on the other hand, penned his ideas after the Glorious Revolution, which had substantially changed the relationship between the King and Parliament, and which a century later led to Parliament's being handed de facto power and the monarch's being relegated to titular status. But Starobin wants to take power away from our Congress, thus disrupting the balance of power in American government. Too demagogic a body, he thinks. And it is "a serious hindrance" to absolutism in a Daddy State.

I thought it bad enough that some conservatives yearn to take us back to the Gilded Age, or to the Eisenhower or the Reagan decade, but Starobin apparently longs for a seventeenth-century restoration of royalty to put some order into the world. Alas, Caesar, Bonaparte, and Mussolini all wanted the same thing. After reading Starobin, am I to believe that we are in the last stage of our great experiment in American democracy?

John G. Schmidt
Alpine, Ariz.

Paul Starobin writes that "[the] condition of extreme vulnerability is borne by, for instance, Palestinians living in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip." Now, it would be hard to think of a more vulnerable population in the world than Israeli Jews, whose every bus ride and every trip to school, pizza parlor, disco, or Passover seder carries with it the very real possibility of death at the hands of those same Palestinians, who have *chosen* their vulnerability by disdaining possibilities of peaceful and respectful coexistence in favor of the wicked goal of exterminating Israel by means of suicide bombings and other murders—making Israeli action against them both necessary and predictable.

No doubt one who murders his parents is thereby an orphan, but to declaim that he or she is entitled to the sympathy and protection of the state on that account is preposterous—and really, in itself, wicked as well.

Robert Cohen
Brighton, Mass.

Paul Starobin replies:

John Schmidt's depiction of Thomas Hobbes as an unabashed believer in the divine right of kings—and something of a political opportunist—sent me scurrying to The English Philosophers From Bacon to Mill, a 1939 anthology from The Modern Library that I lifted from my father some years ago. Hobbes, who was born in 1588, is situated between Francis Bacon, born in 1561, and John Locke, born in 1632. During the "turbulent period of the civil wars" in England, Edwin A. Burt, a professor of philosophy at Cornell, writes in the introduction, "British philosophy was challenged to clarify the principles of political organization." Hobbes was chiefly concerned about "the competition of political control" between King and Parliament, with sectarian partisans on each side: "the only solution of the evil lay in recognizing an absolute and undivided sovereignty in the established government of the state." Hobbes was above all searching for a formula for peace and stability—and in *Leviathan* he argues that either a sovereign assembly or a sovereign monarch could do the trick. His refusal to come down squarely on the side of the royalists displeased them—just as those on the other side, the parlia-

mentarians, were unhappy that his recipe left the door open for a monarch. Another interpreter of Hobbes, the Canadian political philosopher Crawford Brough MacPherson, writes in an introduction to *Leviathan* (Pelican Books, 1968) that Hobbes's doctrine "was not calculated to please any of those who successively held power through this period, for it denied all of them the sorts of justification they wanted." And even though "some of Hobbes's enemies tried to make him out a turncoat," MacPherson notes, Hobbes "maintained and published a single doctrine throughout," and "when one looks at the way his mind arrived at the doctrine there is every reason to believe that he had been thinking all along as a scientist, not as a partisan."

Coming along a half century later, Locke broke with Hobbes on a key point: Whereas Hobbes gave the sovereign, whether a monarch or an assembly, the power to appoint successors, Locke endorsed the election of a parliament by the people. Nevertheless, Hobbes represented enlightenment for his time. Had he not named his principal tract after a sea monster (the benign subtitle to *Leviathan* was "The Matter, Forme & Power of a Common-Wealth"), I suspect his reputation would be less fearsome.

As for Robert Cohen's comment on Israel, it is certainly right to fault the leadership of the Palestinian community for some terribly shortsighted judgments in diplomatic negotiations with Israeli and U.S. leaders, but surely it's a stretch to say that the Palestinian people have in any fashion chosen their vulnerability. The core problem in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a basic asymmetry: the Israelis have both a nation and a state; the Palestinians have a nation but no state. There is no prospect for less bloodshed without a Palestinian state.

Unfair Game?

Normally book reviews attempt to accurately indicate the author's purpose and arguments. Calling these into question is fair game, as long as the reviewer provides countervailing arguments or evidence. Tom Carson's review of my *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids* ("The Kids Are All Right," July/August *Atlantic*) simply skips this and launches into misrepresentation and gratuitous sarcasm. Snide and irrel-

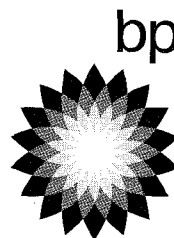
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evant remarks aside ("they'd be better off not going to Uncle Murray with their problems"), Carson seems to have three primary charges.

First, he says, the findings are obvious: "This is certainly stop-the-presses stuff"; "the results of his painstaking investigations [are that] adolescents seem to care a lot about clothes"; "teen social hierarchies exist; he's got the field reports to prove it." Early in the book I note that most people already know a lot about teenagers from their own experience and a variety of other sources, and continue,

While I will identify particular crowds and cliques and provide descriptions of how teenagers behave, this is not the primary purpose of this book. Rather it is to provide a set of systematic explanations—not simply to describe how teenagers behave, but to explain why they behave this way.

Carson virtually ignores the theoretical arguments and the explanations offered, which constitute the bulk of the book.

Second, Carson claims that I "reduce adolescent behavior to consumerism alone, or to status-seeking alone." On page ten I say,

All theories focus on some features of the concrete world and ignore others, [enabling] you to see important processes that are obscured if you try to look at everything . . . This book will focus on status relations and status processes . . . Certainly students' experience in high school is not solely a matter of competing for status. [I then indicate some of the other important things that happen during the teen years, and continue:] My goal is not to portray the full complexity of high school life. It is to highlight an aspect of behavior especially characteristic of teenagers and explain why these patterns . . . are so salient . . . To document widespread drug use is not to say that everyone uses drugs, or that all users are addicts. [Explaining] the status processes that shape teenage behavior is not to capture the totality of teenage experience. Describing and explaining status processes is, however, a crucial prerequisite for understanding teenage behavior, and the significance of this behavior in the wider society.

I also make clear that neither adolescent nor adult life can be reduced to consumerism.

Third, Carson claims, my analysis of teen behavior "is just window dressing, because Milner has a larger thesis to share—or, rather, since it's only tenuously connected to much of the behavior he elaborates, a rant." I do argue that the status competition in high schools plays a role in creating an overemphasis on consumerism, at the expense of other values and needs in our society. My arguments and evidence cannot be repeated here, but I invite anyone to read either of my two chapters on consumerism to compare this with Carson's review, and to decide for themselves who is engaged in a meanspirited, unsubstantiated rant.

Murray Milner Jr.
Institute for the Advanced Study of Culture
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Va.

Tom Carson starts out on the right foot by aptly pointing out the basic difference between what high school means in this country (the beginning of freedom) and what it means in other developed countries (the beginning of responsibility). But he fails to explain the fundamental cause for the stark contrast: a completely different vision of how to educate young people. In Europe and in many Asian countries, for example, stiff national exams are administered to sort out students at the end of primary or middle school. Only those who pass these exams are allowed to enter specialized high schools. The United States opposes this system of differentiation, opting instead for a system of democratization. The controversy surrounding the use of the SAT, high school exit exams, and No Child Left Behind—mandated standardized tests is evidence of our resistance. The adolescent subcultures that develop in the books Carson reviews are predictable in light of the students who fill the schools.

Walt Gardner
Los Angeles, Calif.

Wayne Shorter

The piece on Wayne Shorter by T Francis Davis ("A Real Gone Guy," June *Atlantic*) contains a couple of

factual errors and also a few dubious statements. The "infrequent albums" Shorter released during his fifteen years with Weather Report consisted of exactly one: *Native Dancer*, a lovely collaboration with the Brazilian singer Milton Nascimento that was hardly "awash in synthesizers." Nor did it contain the "trite funk rhythms" that Davis describes.

It is simply not true that Shorter's "first working band" is "the quartet he played with on a tour of Europe in 2001." Starting in the summer of 1985 he had a touring and working ensemble consisting of Gary Willis, Tom Canning, and Tom Brechtlein that toured through the end of 1986 (Mitch Forman replaced Canning in the spring of 1986). In 1987 and 1988 he had a working band that featured Terri Lyne Carrington and Renee Rosnes. The list goes on through the 1990s. To be unaware of Shorter's extensive touring schedule through the eighties and nineties is to be curiously uninformed about his career.

The comments about Weather Report ("Zawinul converted the supposedly leaderless jazz-rock fusion ensemble into a vehicle for his electronic gadgetry") make me wonder if Davis ever actually heard that band. Even if he is relying solely on recordings to make that judgment, he should consult the recently released two-CD set of live material on CBS Sony. Shorter was by no means handcuffed or overshadowed in that ensemble.

Michael McLaughlin
Chicago, Ill.

Francis Davis replies:

Exactly when Shorter quit Weather Report has always been ambiguous, so I counted albums such as Atlantis (1985) and Phantom Navigator (1987), which were similar to those of Weather Report both texturally and rhythmically. Native Dancer was lightweight; the bands Michael McLaughlin mentions were hardly permanent working and recording units, as Shorter's current quartet appears to be; and I am hardly alone in thinking that Weather Report quickly became a vehicle for Zawinul's electronics.

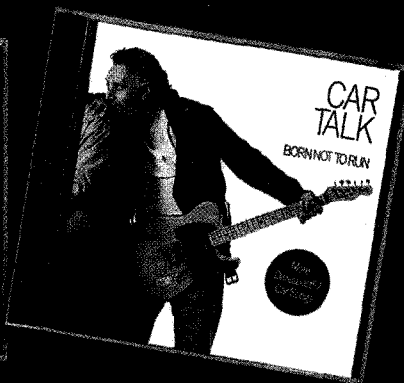
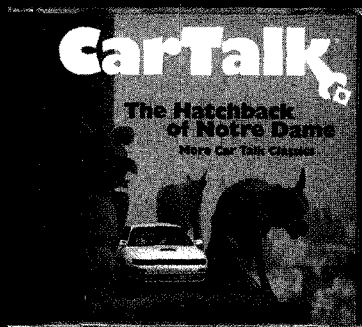
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Advice & Consent

Nasra Hassan's insightful discussion of Pakistani *jihadis*, "Al-Qaeda's Understudy" (June *Atlantic*), started me thinking how little we've adjusted military doctrine to fit the realities of ancient-cum-modern religious warfare. All the talk about transforming the Defense Department has more to do with establishing new capabilities derived from technology than with understanding how our new enemies organize and operate against us. Since our adversaries get a vote on how wars are fought, we should try to understand the ground rules of combat from their perspective as well as our own. Religious warfare may have its own rules quite apart from what we understand about asymmetrical warfare, sometimes called unconventional warfare or, in a loose sense, counterinsurgency.

Both regular and irregular armies have some kind of doctrinal base. I use the term "confessional warfare" to characterize war with an enemy motivated by religious conviction. Hassan explains how some militants move between the religious and the secular with very little change in conviction, depending on the rage at the moment. From the perspective of confessional warfare, the distinction lacks significance. Or so it seems to me.

Fighting those who fight for a religious or a secular god should not be undertaken lightly, using conventional forces or tactics. When one confronts true believers, the notion of psychological operations acquires a totally new meaning. What does "body count" mean in the context of those anxious to die? Leaflets suggesting that our enemy is not fighting for "the one true God" are likely to produce a negative result, if any result at all. Failing to recognize motivational religious and political shifts is itself failure. For too long we've relied principally on our technology edge and our superior equipment and professional training. If this is the rule today rather than the exception, is there any doubt why Osama bin Laden calls us an arrogant contestant? Superior hardware and ultimate victory are not necessarily connected.

Too often we treat our enemies as if they were fanatics, in some way mentally deranged. But Hassan explains

that "fanatics" use terrorist tactics as a means, not an end. All of this is rather confusing at first blush—but we must learn to fight the enemies we have, not the ones we'd like to have. Most military thinkers I know found the Cold War rather simple and clear-cut: the issues between East and West would be decided in a gigantic clash of armor at the Fulda Gap ... or somewhere.

The same people today are grasping for ways to cope with threats from confessional elements they cannot intuitively understand. I'm not sure how al-Qaeda defines victory. Nor am I sure how we define defeat. The only thing I'm sure of is that those who embrace the al-Qaeda agenda in one form or another have studied Ho Chi Minh's playbook. They are going to play not to our strengths but to our weaknesses. Our greatest deficiency to date may be that we understand so little of what fuels the engine of those who seek our collapse.

Charles A. Krohn

*Former civilian deputy chief of public affairs, U.S. Army
Burke, Va.*

Having just finished Scott Stossel's article "Knifed" (May *Atlantic*) on how Ted Kennedy may have kept Sargent Shriver from being Hubert Humphrey's running mate in 1968 and thus helped throw the election to Nixon, my conclusion is that this is an old case of a conclusion in search of a supporting story.

Although Stossel offers convincing evidence that Ted Kennedy did not want Shriver on the Democratic ticket that year, his case that the Paris-based Shriver was even seriously considered by Humphrey is slim indeed. One also has to question how serious a vice-presidential prospect Shriver was if Theodore White and the three young British journalists who wrote *An American Melodrama*—by far the four best chroniclers of the 1968 campaign—agree that Senators Ed Muskie (Maine) and Fred Harris (Oklahoma) were the only candidates seriously considered for the ticket by Humphrey. Indeed, Shriver is not even mentioned in either book.

More disturbing to me, as a student of history, is Stossel's conclusion that "as one of the nation's most prominent lay

Catholics, Shriver would most likely have fared better than Muskie among Catholic voters." Coupled with his earlier remark that "the matter of Humphrey's vice-presidential selection" might have tilted the election, this is all quite an insult to Senator Muskie. Tom Wicker, of *The New York Times*, wrote that Muskie was "one of the few advantages the ill-financed Humphrey campaign could boast." Much was made of the fact that Muskie was only the third Roman Catholic in history on a Democratic national ticket, and also the son of immigrants; it is hard to imagine how Shriver could have fared better among Catholics. In fact, if any vice-presidential candidate helped a national ticket, it was clearly the senator from Maine, who "impressed voters with his dignified demeanor, his knowledge, and his obvious ability," as Wicker reported. "It became a campaign cliché to refer to the lanky Muskie as 'Lincolnesque.'"

This is in no way to disparage Shriver's contribution to public life—only to say that his biographer could have said just as much good about him without revising political history.

John Gizzi
Political Editor
Human Events
Washington, D.C.

My regard for Christopher Hitchens is substantial. But his aching polemic, "Poor Old Willie" (May *Atlantic*), works hard to change that. The "review" was sadly much more about W. Somerset Maugham's gay lifestyle than about the new biography by Jeffrey Meyers; pluck out a sentence and one would simply never have a clue as to what it was all about.

I hope the new biography shows more than just the gay Gomorrah that so preoccupied Hitchens, because Maugham's autobiography, *The Summing Up*, is both fun and short, akin to Stephen King's recent *On Writing*. And like King's booklet, it may be most valuable in assisting the new or struggling writer with humble tools and philosophies.

For example, kick-starting the stalled writer: Maugham admits to the simple, repetitious copying of the works of masters, which is not an unsound exercise for any beginner. Maugham added a sec-

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ond layer to his study: after copying, he would attempt to write out the passage from memory.

If some of that influence found its way into his work, it should neither affront nor surprise Hitchens. Conrad (to whom Maugham's "The Outstation" was an obvious homage) was doubtless one of Maugham's many writing "teachers," as were Swift, Dryden, Dr. Johnson, and many others. Maugham had simply copied him once too often, I suppose.

*Scott W. Crytser
Spokane, Wash.*

In the July/August "Primary Sources" is a report on the Arab world's view of the movie *The Passion of the Christ*. Turkey, however, which had the most box-office revenue for *The Passion* at the time you went to press, is not an Arab country but a Muslim one. "The *Passion* of the Muslim World" and "Muslim box office" would have been correct and appropriate.

*Abe Lebovic
Astoria, N.Y.*

Editors' Note:

Abe Lebovic is correct. Turkey is not an Arab country, and the item would therefore have been more accurately titled as he suggests. We regret the oversight.

In Max Holland's important article "The Assassination Tapes" (June *Atlantic*), Holland has Lyndon Johnson wondering whether the Kennedy assassination might have originated in the Castro government. There is one plausible idea that I haven't seen considered anywhere—namely, that the Castro government had something to do with it, but not Castro himself. As in any crime, you have to analyze motives, and there is clear evidence that Castro and Kennedy were both looking at the possibility of rapprochement. I traveled through Cuba with my late father, the New York attorney James B. Donovan (negotiator for the Bay of Pigs prisoners), in the spring of 1963, and the idea of rapprochement was discussed for many hours. Indeed, it was on this trip that the process of exploring such an option originated. Thus I don't believe that Castro would have felt he had anything to gain by plotting Kennedy's assassination.

Certain people on the American side would have fiercely opposed accommodation with Cuba, and conspiracy theories have grown up around that fact. But there was also fierce opposition within the Castro government to my father in his negotiations, and to any idea of accommodation with the United States. One of the highest-ranking opponents was José Abrahantes, then the Minister of the Interior in Havana, who was executed some years later for drug trafficking. I have no evidence to implicate Abrahantes in the Kennedy assassination, but any examination of motives should take his faction into account. These observations are in no way a criticism of Holland's excellent piece.

*John B. Donovan
Larchmont, N.Y.*

In response to Jonathan Rauch's "A More Perfect Union" (April *Atlantic*), and to support the argument that the purpose of marriage is procreation, Gail T. Lambert (Letters, June *Atlantic*) cites an Arizona law that allows first cousins to marry only if one is sterile. The logic behind this argument is fundamentally flawed. If the purpose of marriage is procreation, what is the point of allowing infertile people to marry? Additionally, assuming that the state has an interest in heterosexual marriage as the source of future taxpayers (as Lambert claims), and that two-parent families give children the best chance for a successful adulthood, one would expect divorce to be strongly discouraged, if not outlawed—at least until the children reach adulthood, at which point marriage no longer serves the purpose of raising children. Perhaps the state should dissolve any marriage that is not in the process of producing and rearing children.

Lambert goes on to ask, "Must we give tax breaks to two working adults who claim to be homosexual lovers?" To the best of my knowledge, a significant portion of tax benefits for married couples apply only if they have children. Now that more and more gay couples are becoming parents, is it fair to deny them these benefits, given that they have taken on the task of raising future taxpaying citizens?

*Brian Fewell
Rochester, Minn.*

The "statistics" provided in the June Agenda purporting to show the amount of time Americans spend commuting in various large cities ("Seven Days in Traffic") certainly fell into the "damned lies" category. The graph indicates, for example, that New Yorkers spend 6.7 days each year commuting. According to the U.S. Census Bureau data this figure is based on, the average time commuting to work in New York City is 38.4 minutes. Times two (this is clearly a one-way number, and most people want to get home, too) that equals one hour and seventeen minutes a day. With 250 workdays a year (your assumption), this means New Yorkers spend 320 hours a year commuting. Using the standard work-week definition of forty hours, this means Americans spend an additional eight work weeks, or nearly two full months, just commuting to their jobs. Sure sounds a lot longer than your 6.7 days! No wonder America is the Land of the Obese—who has time to exercise when they spend all that time on the road?

*Jean Gianfranceschi
Antananarivo, Madagascar*

Editors' Note:

Jean Gianfranceschi is correct in observing that the Census data cited consider the morning commute only, and that the total amount of time a New Yorker loses to commuting annually is therefore 13.4 days, not 6.7. The subsequent estimate that the average New Yorker loses "two full months" to commuting does indeed sound "a lot longer" than the Census figure. However, Gianfranceschi obtains the two-month number by counting an eight-hour workday as a "day," whereas the Census estimate is based on the full twenty-four-hour day.

In my letter to the editor published in the July/August issue of your magazine, I wrote, "The state of Oklahoma has a divorce rate greater than 50 percent." The line should have read, "The state of Oklahoma's divorce rate is 50 percent higher than the national average." My apologies.

*Susan Messenheimer
Truro, Mass.*

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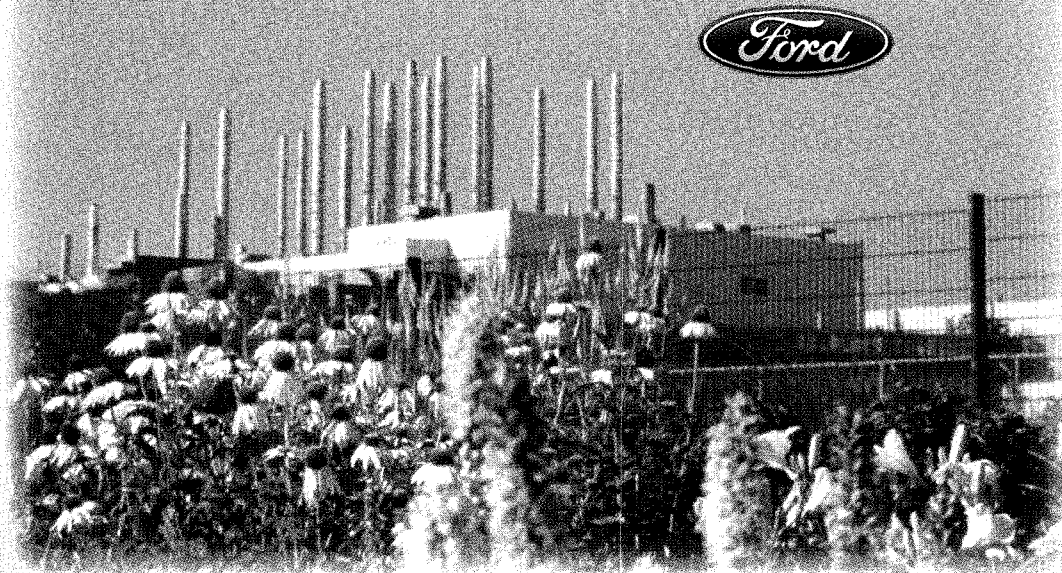
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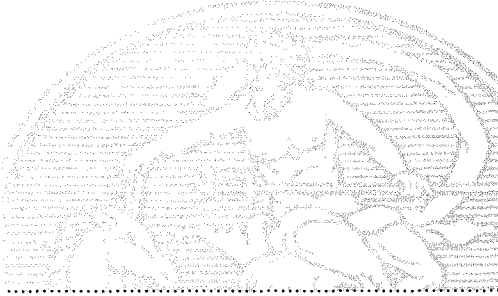
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COMMENT

The Stakes in 2004

The coming presidential election may be the most important in generations

BY MICHAEL BARONE

Presidential elections are not created equal; certain elections have mattered more than others. Sometimes voters face a decision within narrow margins, as seemed to be the case in 2000, when the choice was between an incumbent Vice President in a relatively moderate Democratic Administration and a Republican governor who campaigned as what he called a "compassionate conservative." But other times the choice is starker. In 1864, 1868, and 1872 the Republicans stood for freeing the slaves and for military enforcement of black civil rights in the South; the Democrats were against both. In 1896 William Jennings Bryan stood for populism, free trade, and free silver; William McKinley stood for the gold standard and high tariffs. (And in 1900 Bryan and McKinley battled over the issue of American expansion abroad.) In 1936 Franklin Roosevelt stood for the New Deal, and Alf Landon stood against it. In 1940 Roosevelt's re-election would have meant a forward stance against the Axis powers; it is unclear whether Wendell Willkie would have gone so far.

More recently there have been elections in which the gap between the candidates was large, but the race itself was never close and the outcome never in doubt. Voters rejected Barry Goldwater's conservatism in 1964 and George McGovern's and Walter Mondale's liberalism in 1972 and 1984.

This year's election promises to be a relative rarity: the stakes are very high, and as of this writing the race seems to be very close. The nearest analogies may be 1940 (when it was not clear as late as July whether FDR would even run for a third term, let alone win it) and 1864 (when as late as the end of August, before Grant and Sherman won important victories over the Confederacy, it seemed likely that George McClellan would defeat Abraham Lincoln). Voters sense that much is at stake in the contest between George W. Bush and John F. Kerry—perhaps in part because it will either ratify or reject the results of 2000, an election that was more consequential, Americans now understand, than anyone thought at the time. Very early in the 2004 campaign 71 percent of those surveyed by the pollster Scott Rasmussen said that the outcome would influence their lives "a lot"; only 52 percent were willing to say as much when polled during the Florida-recount controversy in 2000.

The gap between the two candidates is substantial in virtually every area. In foreign policy, for example, George W. Bush has sought a more radical change in course than any other President since Harry Truman. Whereas Truman's Cold War policies—the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin airlift—were supported by his 1948 opponent, Thomas Dewey, and largely continued by his successor, Dwight Eisenhower, many of Bush's post-9/11 policies—including the prosecution of the war in Iraq and the conduct of relations with allies such as France and Germany—have been harshly attacked by Kerry. Bush has issued a National Security Strategy endorsing pre-emptive war and unilateral military action by the United States under some circumstances, and has shifted from the traditional policy

appointing a staunchly conservative Attorney General, and reducing the leverage of federal employees' unions. Meanwhile, the Democrats have moved left on some issues—notably free trade—and are proposing more in the way of tax increases and expansion of federal health-care programs than Clinton did after 1994. A second Bush term might well produce starker domestic-policy changes than a Kerry term would: free-trade agreements with more countries, individual investment accounts in Social Security, new tax-free savings vehicles. In contrast, Kerry's promised domestic agenda—higher taxes for higher earners, more government-supported health care, reduced accountability under the education law—seems unlikely to be approved absent changes in the composition of Congress, which no one is betting on. The Democrats have some chance of

given the age of the incumbents, the next President may appoint as many as four—an opportunity no President has had since Richard Nixon's first term. Justices appointed by the next President could remain on the Court through the 2030s; and although it is not clear that they would revisit *Roe v. Wade* or any other specific decision, the docket in the years ahead will almost certainly hold cases that chart the national direction on federalism and the place of religion in public life.

What will happen to the party that loses the presidency? After Al Gore's loss the Democrats moved to the left rhetorically and on issues such as trade and Social Security; Bill Clinton's New Democratic rhetoric now seems largely forgotten. It was only after three successive losses, in 1980, 1984, and 1988, that the Democrats, chastened, decided to take Clinton's centrist path in the first place. If Kerry loses, the Democrats will have a Clintonian option in Hillary Rodham Clinton; but after a defeat the party may be more open to a moderate challenger like the vice-presidential nominee, John Edwards—or a leftist insurgent like Howard Dean. As for the Republicans, a party in opposition has a tendency toward fissiparousness. If they lose the White House, will the working alliance between economic and cultural conservatives hold together? Will religious conservatives continue to exercise a veto over the party's nomination? Could a candidate like Rudolph Giuliani take the Republicans in a new, more libertarian direction? If the war in Iraq is seen as one of the causes of a Bush defeat, a bitter conflict could break out between neoconservative advocates of Bush's foreign policy, foreign-policy realists, and, perhaps, Pat Buchanan-style isolationists.

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood," begins one of Robert Frost's most famous poems. One cannot say with certainty where the Bush or the Kerry road would actually take us, but the divergence is not just rhetorical but real—and very wide indeed. ▀

Michael Barone, a senior writer at U.S. News & World Report and a panelist on The McLaughlin Group, is a co-author of The Almanac of American Politics, which is published every two years by National Journal.

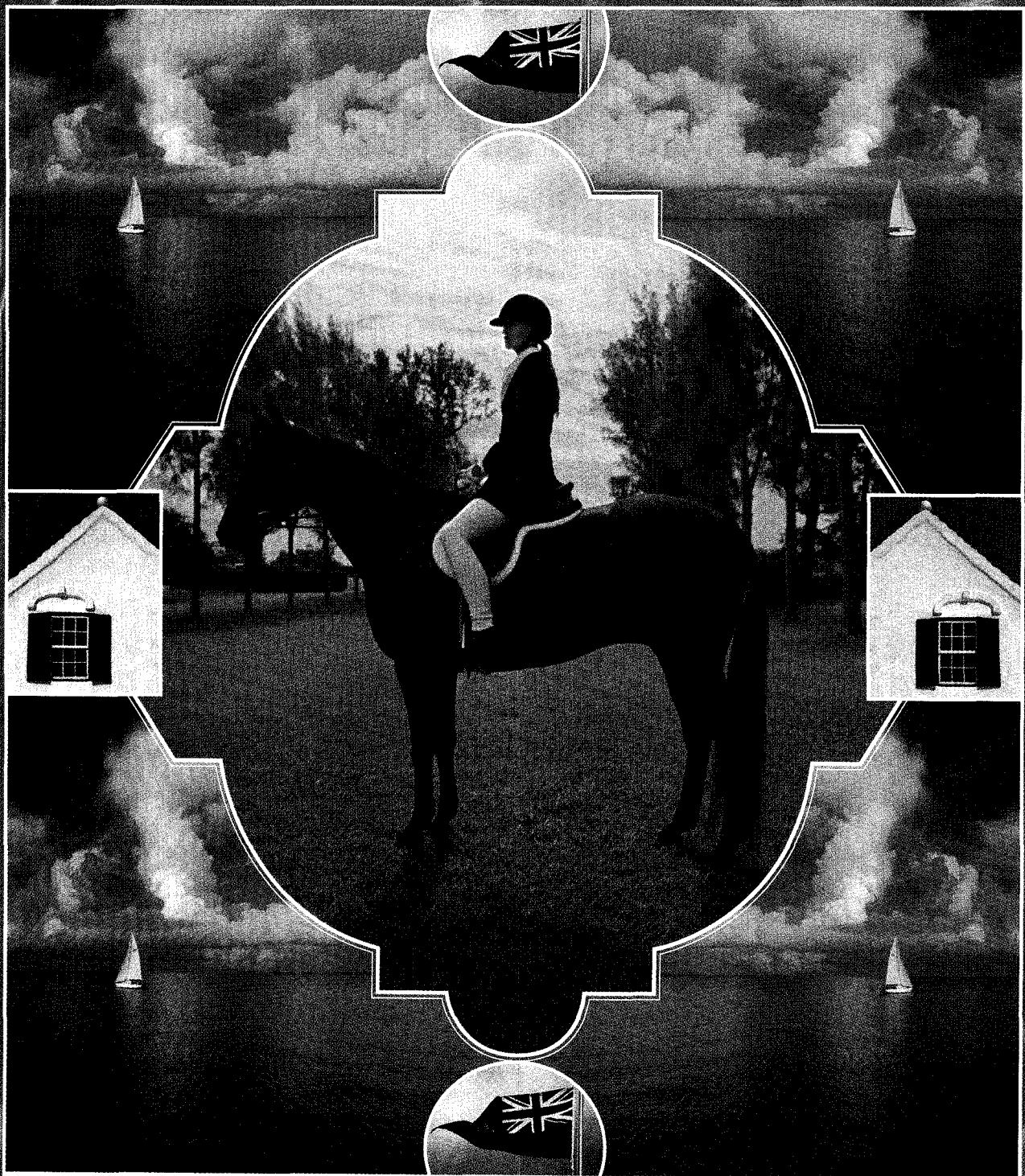
Bush versus Kerry may represent America's most momentous electoral choice since FDR versus Wendell Willkie—if not since Abraham Lincoln versus George McClellan.

of merely seeking stability in the Middle East to a new policy of trying to advance freedom and democracy there. Kerry has criticized Bush's handling of the war in Iraq, and regularly criticizes what he has called "the most reckless, inept, arrogant, and ideological foreign policy in the modern history of our country." In foreign affairs a Kerry Administration would in all likelihood give greater weight to the views of, say, France and Germany, which opposed Bush on Iraq, and more deference to international organizations. In other words, a President Kerry would pursue a foreign policy that looked a lot more like the one the United States had before 9/11—and America would leave a smaller, lighter footprint in the world. A second Bush Administration, in contrast, would regard its return to office as a vindication of the approach we have seen so far.

On domestic matters Bush has governed further to the right than many anticipated he would—for instance, pushing through a series of big tax cuts,

winning a majority in the Senate, but very little of winning one in the House; and although a majority in the Senate gives a party some leverage, a majority in the House, with its control over procedure on the floor, gives a party control. A re-elected Bush could count on pretty solid support in the House; a newly elected Kerry would need all Bill Clinton's maneuvering skills to get anything close to what he wanted from it. Still, the mere fact that a President Kerry would not push the things a President Bush would push is significant in itself. The Bush tax cuts, for instance, would not become permanent during a Kerry presidency; the 1996 welfare law might be greatly altered; and domestic spending might be increased more than Bush would allow.

Every election brings hand-wringing from one camp or another about the future of the Supreme Court, but the stakes this time could in fact be monumental. No new justices have been appointed for a decade (the second longest such period in history);



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The Natural

Why is Barack Obama generating more excitement among Democrats than John Kerry?

BY RYAN LIZZA

Earlier this year an East African newspaper sent a reporter to the region of Siaya, in Kenya, near Lake Victoria, where the father of a forty-three-year-old Chicago Democrat named Barack Obama was born. News that the younger Obama was emerging as one of the brightest lights in American politics had only recently reached the area. "Most people," the paper reported, "were heard wondering aloud: *Wuod Kogelo dwaro golo Bush e kom.*" That translates as "A son of Kogelo clan is challenging President George Bush for presidency in America." So far Obama is merely a Democratic candidate for the Senate. But the Kenyans can be forgiven their mistake. Since he won an upset victory in a seven-person primary in March, Democrats have sometimes seemed more excited about Obama's future than that of the candidate who actually is challenging Bush this year.

It's not hard to see why. Obama has an irresistibly American biography and the political skills to match it. His father grew up herding goats in Kenya, but in 1959 became the first African to enroll at the University of Hawaii, where he met Barack's future mother, a white Kansan who is a distant descendant of Jefferson Davis. Two years after Barack's birth his parents separated, and thereafter he was raised in a multiracial milieu in Hawaii and Indonesia by his white grandparents and mother and his Indonesian stepfather. Educated at Columbia University and Harvard Law School, he gained national attention as the first black president of the *Harvard Law Review*. Eschewing the Supreme Court clerkships and corporate-law-firm jobs available to him, he instead toiled as a civil-rights lawyer in Chicago. In 1996 he won a state-senate seat representing part of the city's South Side, a place *The Almanac of American Politics* describes as "the nation's largest urban black community for nearly a century."

Despite this remarkable history, Obama's decision last year to pursue a Senate seat struck many as foolish. In 2000 he had challenged the former Black Panther Bobby Rush, by then a veteran congressman from Chicago, and been beaten badly. Nevertheless, he went up against six opponents in the Senate primary and this time garnered a stunning 53 percent of the vote. Not only did Obama overcome issues of youth and inexperience, but he resoundingly defeated the two establishment favorites: a self-funded multimillionaire and the anointed candidate of the Democratic political machine. Perhaps most impressive, he conquered many of the geographic and racial barriers that hamper minority candidates: defying the conventional wisdom that a black candidate in Illinois couldn't fare well outside Chicago, he carried the city's wealthy suburbs and middle-class "collar counties." Practically overnight the victory transformed Obama into a national political celebrity.

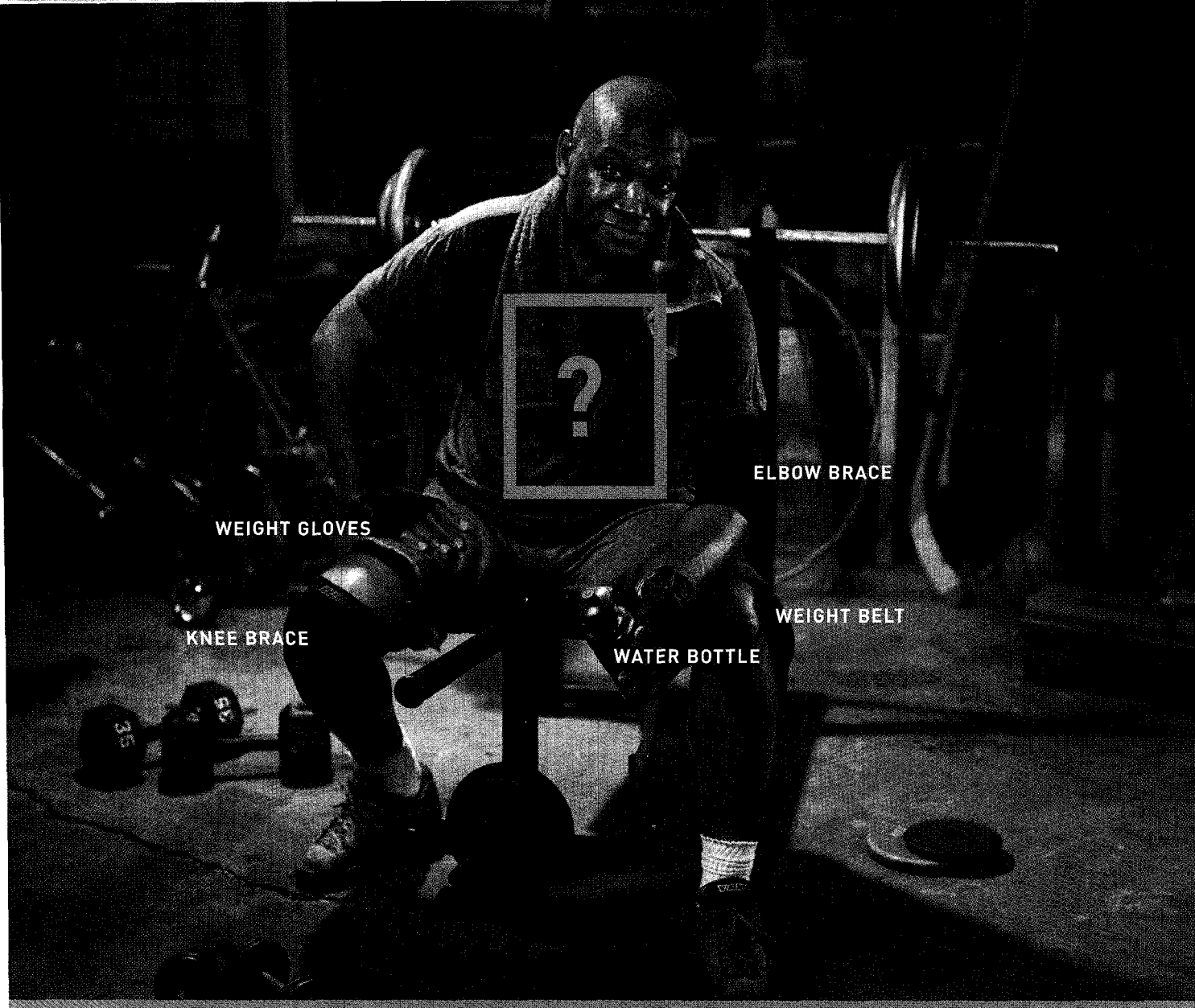
A few months ago I flew out to Springfield to join him for a day and see firsthand an ambitious local pol turned likely U.S. senator. I was hardly alone. A procession of national reporters was already rolling in, along with professional Democratic operatives, whom the boyish, lanky Obama has dubbed "D.C. suits." Obama seemed well up to the occasion. As we toured the capital city, he accepted congratulations, handshakes, and female attention at every turn. Asked about his sudden stardom (even many Illinois Republicans are fans), he flashed a smile and delivered a well-practiced line: "The pundits and the prognosticators presumed that a skinny guy with a funny name from the South Side of Chicago couldn't get any votes outside a pretty narrow band of the electorate. I think the primary blew those assumptions

out of the water. And I think people are proud of that."

Obama can be permitted this note of self-satisfaction. Even before his original opponent, Jack Ryan, withdrew amid outrage over a sex scandal, polls put Obama comfortably ahead. Control of the Senate is at stake this fall, and the seat Obama is pursuing, currently held by the retiring Republican Peter Fitzgerald, is the one most likely to be captured by the Democrats. In fact, the party is so confident of victory that when I encountered Rahm Emanuel, an influential Democratic congressman from Chicago, he waved his hand at me and declared flatly, "The race is over." Anything can happen; but chances are that come January, Barack Obama will be sworn in as the sole current African-American member of the U.S. Senate, and only the third since Reconstruction. He has already established a path to higher office that has eluded minority politicians for generations. What would be most notable about his victory would be not *that* he won but *how* he won.

Obama's significance may be best understood statistically. More than 9,000 black elected officials currently serve in the United States, yet serious black candidates for the Senate and governorships are rare. Institutional reasons largely explain this striking disparity. The civil-rights legislation of the 1960s, which encouraged more blacks to run for elective office, produced a mature class of politicians only around the 1990s. "That's the time the first class of elected black officials had enough experience in politics where they could consider serious runs for higher office," says David Bositis, of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Since then gerrymandering has created a growing number of minority-heavy districts like the one Obama represents, which is 66 percent black.

This has helped to elect many black lawmakers, but it has also hampered their advancement. Such politicians naturally focus on issues that concern their constituents. But these issues differ markedly from—and are often at odds with—the concerns of the sub-



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- Amiodarone or verapamil with higher doses of ZOCOR.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of simvastatin.

Because the risk of muscle side effects is greater when ZOCOR is used with the products listed above, the combined use of these products should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits are likely to outweigh the increased risks.

The dose of ZOCOR should not exceed 10 mg daily in patients receiving gemfibrozil. The combined use of ZOCOR and gemfibrozil should be avoided, unless your doctor determines that the benefits outweigh the increased risks of muscle problems. Caution should be used when using ZOCOR with other fibrates or niacin because these can cause muscle problems when taken alone.

No more than 10 mg/day of ZOCOR should be taken with cyclosporine.

The combined use of verapamil or amiodarone with doses above ZOCOR 20 mg should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits outweigh the increased risk of muscle breakdown.

Your doctor should also carefully monitor for any muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly during the initial months of therapy and if the dose of either drug is increased. Your doctor also may monitor the level of certain muscle enzymes in your body, but there is no assurance that such monitoring will prevent the occurrence of severe muscle disease.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems or diabetes.

If you have conditions that can increase your risk of muscle breakdown, which in turn can cause kidney damage, your doctor should temporarily withhold or stop ZOCOR. Also, since there are no known adverse consequences of briefly stopping therapy with ZOCOR, treatment should be stopped a few days before elective major surgery and when any major acute medical or surgical condition occurs. Discuss this with your doctor, who can explain these conditions to you.

Liver: About 1% of patients who took ZOCOR in clinical trials developed elevated levels of some liver enzymes. Patients who had these increases usually had no symptoms. Elevated liver enzymes usually returned to normal levels when therapy with ZOCOR was stopped.

In the ZOCOR Survival Study, the number of patients with more than 1 liver enzyme level elevation to greater than 3 times the normal upper limit was no different between the ZOCOR and placebo groups. Only 8 patients on ZOCOR and 5 on placebo discontinued therapy due to elevated liver enzyme levels. Patients were started on 20 mg of ZOCOR, and one third had their dose raised to 40 mg.

Your doctor should perform routine blood tests to check these enzymes before you start treatment with ZOCOR and thereafter when clinically indicated. Patients titrated to the 80-mg dose should receive an additional test at 3 months and periodically thereafter (eg, semiannually) for the first year of treatment. If your enzyme levels increase, your doctor should order more frequent tests. If your liver enzyme levels remain unusually high, your doctor should discontinue your medication.

Tell your doctor about any liver disease you may have had in the past and about how much alcohol you consume. ZOCOR should be used with caution in patients who consume large amounts of alcohol.

PRECAUTIONS

Drug Interactions: Because of possible serious drug interactions, it is important to tell your doctor what other drugs you are taking, including those obtained without a prescription. You should also tell other doctors

who are prescribing a new medicine for you that you are taking ZOCOR[®] (simvastatin). ZOCOR can interact with the following:

- Itraconazole
- Ketoconazole
- Erythromycin
- Clarithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors
- Nefazodone
- Cyclosporine
- Large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

The risk of myopathy is also increased by gemfibrozil and to a lesser extent other fibrates and niacin (nicotinic acid) (≥ 1 g/day).

The risk of muscle breakdown is increased with other drugs:

- Amiodarone
- Verapamil

Some patients taking lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR and coumarin anticoagulants (a type of blood thinner) have experienced bleeding and/or increased blood clotting time. Patients taking these medicines should have their blood tested before starting therapy with ZOCOR and should continue to be monitored.

Central Nervous System Toxicity; Cancer, Mutations, Impairment of Fertility: Like most prescription drugs, ZOCOR was required to be tested on animals before it was marketed for human use. Often these tests were designed to achieve higher drug concentrations than humans achieve at recommended dosing. In some tests, the animals had damage to the nerves in the central nervous system. In studies of mice with high doses of ZOCOR, the likelihood of certain types of cancerous tumors increased. No evidence of mutations or damage to genetic material has been seen. In 1 study with ZOCOR, there was decreased fertility in male rats.

Pregnancy: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus.

Safety in pregnancy has not been established. In studies with lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR, there have been rare reports of birth defects of the skeleton and digestive system. Therefore, women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely they will become pregnant. If a woman does become pregnant while taking ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once. The active ingredient of ZOCOR did not cause birth defects in rats at 3 times the human dose or in rabbits at 3 times the human dose.

Nursing Mothers: Drugs taken by nursing mothers may be present in their breast milk. Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, a woman taking ZOCOR should not breast-feed. (See WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED.)

Pediatric Use: ZOCOR is not recommended for children or patients under 10 years of age.

Geriatric Use: Higher blood levels of active drug were seen in elderly patients (70–78 years of age) compared with younger patients (18–30 years of age) in 1 study. In other studies, the cholesterol-lowering effects of ZOCOR were at least as great in elderly patients as in younger patients, and there were no overall differences in safety between elderly and younger patients over the 20–80 mg/day dosage range. Of the 7 cases of myopathy/rhabdomyolysis among 10,269 patients on ZOCOR in another study, 4 were aged 65 or more (at baseline), 1 of whom was over 75.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most patients tolerate treatment with ZOCOR well; however, like all prescription drugs, ZOCOR can cause side effects, and some of them can be serious. Side effects that do occur are usually mild and short-lived. Only your doctor can weigh the risks versus the benefits of any prescription drug. In clinical studies with ZOCOR, less than 1.5% of patients dropped out of the studies because of side effects. In 2 large, 5-year studies, patients taking ZOCOR experienced similar side effects to those patients taking placebo (sugar pills). Some of the side effects that have been reported with ZOCOR or related drugs are listed below. This list is not complete. Be sure to ask your doctor about side effects before taking ZOCOR and to discuss any side effects that occur.

Digestive System: Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, gas, heartburn, stomach pain/cramps, anorexia, loss of appetite, nausea, inflammation of the pancreas, hepatitis, jaundice, fatty changes in the liver, and, rarely, severe liver damage and failure, cirrhosis, and liver cancer.

Muscle, Skeletal: Muscle cramps, aches, pain, and weakness; joint pain; muscle breakdown.

Nervous System: Dizziness, headache, insomnia, tingling, memory loss, damage to nerves causing weakness and/or loss of sensation and/or abnormal sensations, anxiety, depression, tremor, loss of balance, psychic disturbances.

Skin: Rash, itching, hair loss, dryness, nodules, discoloration.

Eye/Senses: Blurred vision, altered taste sensation, progression of cataracts, eye muscle weakness.

Hypersensitivity (Allergic) Reactions: On rare occasions, a wide variety of symptoms have been reported to occur either alone or together in groups (referred to as a syndrome) that appeared to be based on allergic-type reactions, which may rarely be fatal. These have included 1 or more of the following: a severe generalized reaction that may include shortness of breath, wheezing, digestive symptoms, and low blood pressure and even shock; an allergic reaction with swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat with difficulty swallowing or breathing; symptoms mimicking lupus (a disorder in which a person's immune system may attack parts of his or her own body); severe muscle and blood vessel inflammation, sometimes including rash; bruises; various disorders of blood cells (that could result in anemia, infection, or blood clotting problems) or abnormal blood tests; inflamed or painful joints; hives; fatigue and weakness; sensitivity to sunlight; fever, chills; flushing; difficulty breathing; and severe skin disorders that vary from rash to a serious burn-like shedding of skin all over the body, including mucous membranes such as the lining of the mouth.

Other: Loss of sexual desire, breast enlargement, impotence.

Laboratory Tests: Liver function test abnormalities including elevated alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities.

NOTE: This summary provides important information about ZOCOR. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the prescribing information and then discuss it with them.



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urban soccer moms and rural voters who are also necessary to win statewide office. During his run against Bobby Rush, Obama once bragged, "I was one of a handful of people who voted against the entire state budget, because I thought too much money was going to the prisons." Hardly a reassuring thought to suburban voters.

Many minority candidates have had such narrow appeal that only a fluke will get them elected to higher office. This was essentially true for the most recent black senator, Carol Moseley Braun, who also hailed from Illinois. Moseley Braun slipped to victory with a paltry 38 percent of the vote after her primary opponents tore each other to shreds, and then rode Bill Clinton's coattails to a 1992 win against an underfunded right-wing opponent. She lost her seat after a single term.

When I visited Obama, he had long since shed any trace of the urban pol hoping merely to outflank another big-city liberal. Our day began in a dark-paneled room of the Illinois statehouse, presided over by murals of Lincoln and Grant, but also by Obama, who was chairing a hearing of the Health and Human Services Committee that had distinctly upper-middle-class undertones. When a mother lobbying for funding for children with autism broke down in tears, Obama discreetly dispatched an aide to give her some tissues. The mother was followed by Lisa Lipin, a white suburbanite, who testified about a toy called the "yo-yo water ball," a rubber globe attached to a stretch cord that had nearly strangled her six-year-old son, Andrew—who helpfully re-enacted the choking for Obama and his fellow legislators, as local news crews recorded the scene.

Over the past couple of years Obama has used his chairmanship of the health committee to broaden his appeal, promoting issues aimed at the Lisa Lipins of the world. He led a fight to ban the dietary supplement ephedra, and after the collapse of a Chicago porch killed thirteen people, he voiced support for stricter building codes. Some of these efforts echo the micro-initiatives that Bill Clinton used so effectively to mobilize the middle class. But Obama hasn't

forsaken minority voters: he has promoted legislation to broaden children's access to health insurance and to make the state's earned-income tax credit refundable. He has earned a reputation as a show horse *and* a workhorse—apt to take a visible role in high-profile issues causing anxiety in suburbia, but equally willing to work doggedly to forge compromises on serious legislation. And he



hasn't shied away from potentially polarizing racial issues; he helped to pass an important law to address racial profiling in Illinois. Obama has transcended the strictly racial identity often forced on—or embraced by—black officials.

Like any political star, Obama has a knack for effortlessly fitting into disparate racial, ideological, and social worlds. As we walked past Abraham Lincoln's old law offices, a disheveled black man standing on a street corner called out, "Hey, Obama, how you doing?" They bantered

like old friends. Later, at an Illinois State Dental Society cocktail party, an entire roomful of mostly white Republican-leaning dentists reoriented themselves in Obama's direction. The accolades flowed: "You are fantastic." "If you were my husband, I wouldn't let you go around alone." "You're going to do a wonderful job in Washington!" "You impress the hell out of me." Obama has perfected a becoming modesty; he often reacts to praise by looking at his shoes and saying, "Oh, you are making me blush."

His skill with constituents extends even to a group that politicians frequently mishandle: the press. Obama has mastered the art of appearing to take reporters into his confidence by dispensing the sort of forthright political chatter that causes them to swoon. I received a signed copy of his autobiography and with it a trenchant analysis of his party's presidential nominee. ("Sometimes Kerry just doesn't have that oomph," he said, punctuating the thought with a tight-lipped shake of the head and a clenched fist.)

If there is a knock against Obama, it is that he is perhaps a little too enchanted with all the attention and acclaim. During the Democratic primary campaign he raised eyebrows by sweeping an opponent's wife into an embrace—a moment captured by a *Chicago Tribune* reporter. The opponent's staff was sufficiently piqued to complain. And I couldn't help noticing, when we sat down to talk in the dilapidated storefront that houses his Springfield campaign headquarters, that the blue-pen drawing he'd doodled on his newspaper during fundraising calls was a portrait of himself.

Still, Obama's ability to appeal to inner-city blacks, suburban moms, Republican dentists, and, well, me suggests that he'll be able to venture further than most black politicians—further even than Carol Moseley Braun. "I'm rooted in the African-American community," he frequently says, "but I'm not limited by it." Indeed, charisma, intelligence, and ambition, tempered by a self-deprecating wit, are the particular hallmarks not so much of a great black politician as of any great one. ■

Ryan Lizza is an associate editor at The New Republic.

POLITICS

Dixie Chicks

A new kind of Democrat is emerging in the South—and she's no shrinking violet

BY ALEXANDRA STARR

A year ago few political experts would have guessed that a woman or a Democrat stood a solid chance of becoming South Carolina's next senator. The fact that Inez Tenenbaum, who is running competitively for the state's open Senate seat, is both makes her a very unusual politician. It's not just her party and her sex that set her apart: at just over five feet tall, Tenenbaum seems to disappear when she wades into a crowd. She gives this, like many other potential negatives, a positive spin: at a recent barbecue fundraiser in Seneca she touted herself as "the little woman with big ideas." This struck a chord with the small-town crowd, whose enthusiasm grew as Tenenbaum recited her qualifications—not just as the state's twice-elected superintendent of education but also as a former homecoming queen. By the time she had exhorted her audience to recruit GRITs—"Good Republicans for Inez Tenenbaum"—most appeared eager to help. "She'd be such a gracious presence in the Senate," Libby Woodell, a retired social worker, said. "There doesn't seem to be a mean bone in her body, but she's tough."

That combination of toughness and charm has helped Tenenbaum join a growing cadre of Democratic women who are winning statewide elections in perhaps the unlikeliest part of the country—conservative Dixie. The South has grown so Republican over the past decade that some Democratic strategists speak openly of abandoning it. Yet in recent years the Democrats Blanche Lincoln, of Arkansas, and Mary Landrieu, of Louisiana, have managed to win Senate races, and Kathleen Blanco the Louisiana governor's race, in a style very much their own. "In their graciousness they are clearly daughters of the South," the political analyst Jennifer Duffy explains. "But

they are also smart, political, and not to be taken lightly." All these women hail from the political center-right, favoring a robust military, gun owners' rights, and tax cuts—a far cry from the pantsuited liberals of the Hillary Clinton mold who leap to mind at the phrase "female Democratic senator." And they skillfully exploit traditional gender stereotypes. "I'm delighted when a man stands up when I enter a room," Lincoln declares. "But once I'm in the room, I also expect there will be a place for me at the table." Duffy has christened this formidable new breed of politician "Steel Magnolias."

Tenenbaum and similar candidates

have found particular favor with women, who are a cornerstone of their electoral success. In a region where the white male vote is staunchly Republican, the best chance for a Democrat to win statewide election is by making substantial inroads among centrist and Republican-leaning women. "There are more independents among white women," says Merle Black, a political scientist at Emory University, "and women candidates seem to have an easier time reaching out to them than some of the male candidates." If a woman can draw on female solidarity and still attract minority votes in sufficient number, she can eke out a victory.

Tenenbaum still has a long way to go to win in what is one of the most Republican states in the South. But the fact that hers and a handful of other races are unexpectedly close means that the Democrats stand a chance of regaining control of the Senate this fall, tipping the balance of power in Washington. Until recently that seemed



an unlikely notion—but then, until recently so did the prospect of a candidate like Tenenbaum.

Getting elected as a Democratic woman in the South is no easy proposition. In addition to everything else a politician is expected to do, candidates must adhere to a strict southern code of personal appearance. In the swampy heat of the barbecue, the immaculately made-up Tenenbaum was invited to shuck her jacket but demurred. “It wouldn’t be senatorial,” she said with a smile. “Those things are important.” Sartorial savoir faire comes naturally to a former homecoming queen, but not every candidate starts off so inclined. Natalie Davis, a political scientist at Birmingham-Southern College, in Alabama, had rarely bothered with makeup before entering the 1996 Democratic senatorial primary; but the campaign consultant she hired told her to pay a visit to the cosmetics counter. Davis’s oversize pins were banished, and she stopped appearing in public wearing slacks. Davis, who lost her race, nevertheless says that every credible female candidate must make similar calculations: “You follow the rules of the game—not new ones you would make for yourself.”

Perhaps the first rule is to project plenty of charm. This can blunt the negative associations that frequently attach to ambitious women. “Inez just gives this warm, connected feeling,” says Anna Ryan, a Republican homemaker in Greenville who has held fundraisers for Tenenbaum. “She’s not at all pushy. She’s determined.” The ability to smooth over a tense situation with a smile and a quip can be invaluable too. Cathy Cox, the Georgia secretary of state, who is being discussed as a possible candidate for governor in 2006, recalls fielding some blatantly sexist queries in the early 1990s when she was a candidate for state representative from a rural county. “People would ask me if I would be all right in Atlanta by myself—particularly because I wasn’t married at the time,” she says. Rather than pointing out that no one would ask this of a man, Cox joked about finding a convent to board with in the big

city. The master of the clever retort, of course, is Cox’s political idol Ann Richards, a pioneering Magnolia who won the Texas governorship in 1990.

It isn’t all Scarlett O’Hara. Being a mother, for example, can be an outright advantage when these candidates want to foster the sense that as lawmakers they are more caring and empathetic than men. During the final days of last year’s race for governor in Louisiana, Kathleen Blanco—locked in a neck-and-neck battle with the Republicans’ thirty-two-year-old whiz kid Bobby Jindal, an assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—very effectively suggested that where Jindal could discern only numbers, she saw real people. Blanco, the mother of six, featured a passel of children in her TV spots to drive the point home. Other Magnolias have used a similar strategy. Blanche Lincoln opted against a third term in the House because of a high-risk pregnancy, but trumpeted her new motherhood when she ran for the Senate two years after her twin sons were born. Her campaign spots featured family photographs with the caption “Daughter, wife, mother, congresswoman.” The order was not arbitrary.

For all that they must prove themselves feminine, these candidates would never carry a state on graciousness and empathy alone. Or, as one of them might put it, there’s plenty of “steel” in a Steel Magnolia—as the former representative Bill Alexander can attest. Lincoln, who once worked for Alexander, got into Congress by beating him in the 1992 primary, where she exploited his role in the House bank-overdraft scandal. “I’ll promise you one thing,” the thirty-one-year-old candidate told voters. “I can sure enough balance my checkbook.” Lincoln’s colleague Mary Landrieu is no shrinking violet either. After a televised debate with her 2002 opponent, Suzanne Terrell, Landrieu snarled, “This is your last campaign.”

This sort of toughness is necessary for political survival. “Democratic women in the South are presumed to be liberal feminists until they prove otherwise,” says the Republican pollster Whit Ayres. The successful ones

THE ODDS

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT?

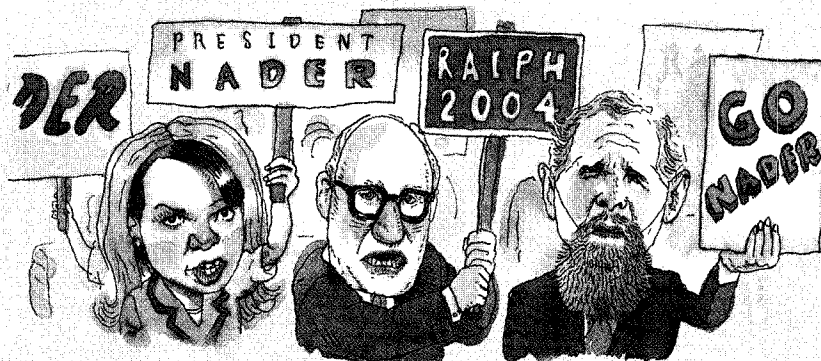
The market speaks



In the neck-and-neck race between George W. Bush and John Kerry, even the slightest twitch in poll numbers can make headlines. Pundits have been issuing declarations about who will win for months. But some election junkies believe that “political markets” are where the smart money turns for the best predictions. These markets allow one to bet on the election’s outcome by buying futures whose value will be determined by a candidate’s share of the two-party popular vote (in 1992 H. Ross Perot was included). Since 1988 the Tippie College of Business, at the University of Iowa, has run the Iowa Electronic Markets, the premier political-futures market. We took a look at its predictions on July 1 of each of the past four presidential-election years, and compared them with the actual results. (It turns out that political markets aren’t much better than pundits.) —NATHAN LITTLEFIELD

2004	JULY 1	RESULT
George W. Bush	52.8%	TBD
John Kerry	46.0%	TBD
2000	JULY 1	RESULT
George W. Bush	48.5%	49.7%
Al Gore	49.3%	50.3%
1996	JULY 1	RESULT
Bill Clinton	51.9%	54.7%
Bob Dole	43.5%	45.3%
1992	JULY 1	RESULT
Bill Clinton	28.0%	43.3%
George H.W. Bush	35.9%	37.7%
H. Ross Perot	35.0%	19.0%
1988	JULY 1	RESULT
George H.W. Bush	46.4%	53.9%
Michael Dukakis	50.4%	46.1%

NADER REPUBLICANS



What do you do if you're a loyal Republican who, like three fifths of George W. Bush's donors, has given \$2,000 to the President's re-election campaign—the maximum that the law allows? If you're among a growing number of clever conservatives, determined to bleed votes from John Kerry at any price, you write a check to Ralph Nader. Who better to throw a close election to your man than the guy who did so last time around? If Machiavelli had had to contend with campaign-finance laws, this is a tactic he might have devised.

Nader himself claims that his candidacy will attract angry conservatives. That description, however, doesn't fit the small but distinguished group of Republicans who have given him money; most had already voted for Bush with their checkbooks, donating thousands of dollars to the President and the Republican Party. "Nader would probably deny it," says Larry Noble, the director of the Center for Responsive Politics, a group that tracks money in politics, "but these people are obviously supporting him to undermine Kerry." According to data collected by the center, Nader's most prominent Republican backer is the billionaire Richard J. Egan, a Bush "Ranger" and recently the ambassador to Ireland, who has so far bundled more than \$200,000 for the President's re-election campaign. Over the past year Egan and his wife have given \$35,000 to the Republican National Committee and thousands more to the party's congressional candidates—so Egan's primary goal in donating \$2,000 to Nader was probably not a return to Dublin as Nader's ambassador.

Another prominent Nader Republican is the conservative comedian

and game-show host Ben Stein. His purposes, too, seem clear. In February the Bush campaign was forced to issue Stein a refund check after his donations exceeded the legal limit. Spotting an alternative, Stein sent Nader \$1,000.

Most conspicuous of late are members of the Club for Growth, a conservative organization that in its zeal for smaller government and lower taxes often targets moderate Republicans. Jeff Yass, an investment-firm principal who has donated \$10,000 to the club since December, has also given \$1,000 to Nader. Another investment pro, Roger Hoffman, has given \$500 to Nader, along with \$4,500 to the Club for Growth and \$2,000 each to Bush and Representative Pat Toomey (a conservative, championed by the club, who challenged the moderate Senator Arlen Specter in Pennsylvania's Republican primary and lost). Lest there still be doubt about Hoffman's agenda, his gift to Nader came two weeks after he made a donation to Americans for a Republican Majority. (As for the club's president, Stephen Moore, he expressed his delight over Bush's victory in 2000 by thanking Nader on CNN for running in that election.)

Democrats are catching on, and they aren't happy. Earlier this summer the chairman of the Arizona Democratic Party complained—though he offered no proof—that a Republican consultant had funded a signature drive to put Nader on the Arizona ballot this fall. But there is little the Democrats can do. For the first time in memory a group of donors is backing a candidate in hopes not that he'll win but merely that he'll fare well enough to make someone else lose. —NATHAN LITTLEFIELD

nip that impression in the bud. The Magnolias are frequently photographed brandishing guns. (Blanco went so far as to display her hunting permit during a debate.) Landrieu has been a vocal proponent of missile defense, earning her the moniker "Military Mary." And on social issues these women often part ways with their blue-state Democratic colleagues: Tenenbaum supports a constitutional amendment prohibiting gay marriage, and Lincoln and Landrieu both voted for the ban on so-called partial-birth abortion.

Not every stereotype is burdensome. Steel Magnolias benefit from the regional perception that women are more responsible with money. "Mommamas do the bookkeeping in the South," says Rich Masters, a former aide to Landrieu. "And they are a lot tighter with the purse strings." Southern Democrats have been eager to convey that impression on the political stage. Lincoln was a founding member of the fiscally conservative House coalition known as the Blue Dogs, and Landrieu earned plaudits for saving Louisiana millions of dollars as state treasurer. Other aspirants are emulating their style: Alabama's lieutenant governor, Lucy Baxley, who first achieved renown as a tightfisted state treasurer, is being canvassed as a possible Democratic candidate for governor in part because her party's last governor, Don Siegelman, was recently indicted for fraud. Precisely because she is a woman, Baxley is perceived to be less corruptible.

In a sense it is odd that women could be the Democrats' salvation in the South. Dixie is hardly a bastion of female empowerment, political or otherwise: state legislatures in the region have among the lowest percentages of female members in the country. But by manipulating traditional perceptions of southern womanhood, the Magnolias have been able to win powerful statewide offices. And in doing so, they have accomplished something that continues to elude most Democratic candidates at the national level: they have convinced southerners that they share and even embody their values enough to deserve election. ■

Alexandra Starr is the Capitol Hill correspondent for BusinessWeek.

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Ayatollah Democracy

Arrogant, dogmatic, and anti-American, Iraq's Shiite clerics are the last people enlightened Westerners want to see in power. Let's hope they prevail

BY RUEL MARC GERECHT

Najaf, the holy center of Shiism in Iraq, sits on the edge of a desert, parched and plain. Two-story plaster and concrete houses compose most of its historic quarters. Nowhere does one find the palm trees, the grass, and the mud that accompany the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the double spine of Mesopotamian civilization. The town's largest open square is a sprawl of dirty khaki-colored tents. In the market, frequented by locals and religious pilgrims, there are no exotic smells, and no music; for sale are only pilgrimage trinkets, small household appliances, cheap clothes, Korans, religious commentaries, and the basic necessities of daily life. From early morning until late at night pedestrians and cars clog the streets. Traffic jams are Volvo junkyards, and even among the most devout the town is known as the "village of Volvos"; Saddam Hussein flooded Najaf with them during the Iran-Iraq War, hoping to buy the loyalty of Shiites, who made up the bulk of his Sunni-led army. Everywhere in Najaf, too, one can sniff the dead. From the golden-domed shrine of Caliph Ali, where the faithful carry their deceased loved ones to bless and commend them, to the town's enormous graveyards, where for centuries hundreds of thousands of lucky Shiites have been buried, a pilgrimage for the dead endlessly repeats itself. The faith envelops one in Najaf.

The political future of Iraq may be determined here. The town is home to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, Iraq's most influential Shiite cleric and the man who, on June 29 of last year, issued a *fatwa* that almost instantly unraveled America's go-slow planning for the postwar reconstruction of Iraq. The *fatwa* asserted that the United States had no legitimate

role to play in determining Iraq's new political makeup—an announcement that made international headlines and exerted a profound effect on Iraqi public opinion. Yet almost no observer has pointed out what was most remarkable about the *fatwa*: namely, that despite its having been issued by a powerful religious leader who has devoted his life to the study of Islamic law, it was a flawlessly secular proclamation that clearly and concisely established "the people" as the final arbiters of Iraq's political system.

Sistani's *fatwa* is worth quoting.

The Occupational Authority in no way has the authority to choose members for the drafting committee of a Basic Law. In no way does any authority exist for such a drafting committee to represent the lofty interests of the Iraqi people or to translate into law the wishes and basic identity of the Iraqi people, the pillars of which are the glorious faith of Islam and society's values. The current [American] plan discussed is fundamentally unacceptable.

Accordingly, popular elections are necessary so that each Iraqi who is of voting age can choose his representative for a constituent assembly. And then any Basic Law written by this assembly must be approved by a national referendum. It is incumbent upon all believers with their utmost commitment to demand this, and asserting the truth of this path is the best way that they can participate in this process.

In Islamic history this opinion is unprecedented. Its references to Islam verge on the pro forma. It makes no allusion to any duties that man owes to God (*huquq Allah*), which is a theme common in both traditional and modern fundamentalist thought. Instead it speaks the language of inalienable rights: one man, one vote; and a constitution written by elected repre-

sentatives and approved by popular referendum. In this one bold stroke Sistani managed to launch, and garner popular support for, a project that Muslim progressives have only ever dreamed of: establishing a democratic political order sanctioned and even protected by the clergy. The critical moral imperative in Islamic history—"al-amr bil-maruf wa al-nahy an al-munkar" ("commanding right and forbidding wrong")—appears in one shape or another eight times in the Koran; for modern Islamic militants it has become a war cry. It justifies the morals police in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan, and the neighborhood bands of young men who harass "improperly" attired Muslim women in Baghdad and Marseilles. But by seeking to blend politics and faith into a rational system in which government is clearly the servant of the commonweal, and by advancing the idea that Muslims have the right to determine the nature of the government over them, Sistani and his colleagues have transformed a commandment previously confined to holy law into a pillar of a new democratic order. This brings to the fore an uncomfortable truth: traditional Shiite clerics, often dismissed as dogmatic medievalists intent on building a theocratic state, may well represent Iraq's best hope for a successful transition to democracy. As such, they have become perhaps the most important actors in modern Middle Eastern history.

When the Coalition Provisional Authority realized, in the fall of last year, that Shiite clerics would be politically crucial in U.S.-occupied Iraq, it wasn't a happy discovery. American diplomats and intelligence agents in Baghdad were used to dealing with highly Westernized Sunnis in the Iraqi elite or thoroughly secularized Shiites in exile. And most journalists who have spent time in the Arab world have done so in the company of Sunnis and Christians, the parents of modern Arab nationalism. Shiite clerics often aren't much fun face-to-face. They tend to exude far less personal warmth than their Sunni counterparts, who are more egalitarian and informal. Inclined to talk elliptically or dismissively to for-

eigners, and endowed with the sort of hubris that comes easily to accomplished lawyers, they are for many U.S. officials enormously frustrating partners in rebuilding Iraq. By insisting on more democracy sooner than the Provisional Authority believed was safe, they failed to act according to plan. They resisted approving an interim constitution—the Transitional Administrative Law—that checks the superior power of the Shiite community at the ballot box, and they have now stated that they may not honor the version of that constitution signed by the members of the Iraqi Governing Council, including its Shiites.

As a result, U.S. officials have become uncomfortable with and often vexed by Iraq's traditional Shiite clergy; and with various clerics now declaring their anti-American allegiances more openly than ever, that discomfort is only likely to grow. Sistani could well come to be viewed in Washington as the ringleader of an increasingly hostile Iraq. But we shouldn't necessarily fear the anti-Americanism of the Shiites, or think less of Sistani if he collides with the unelected transitional government. His actions may confound the Bush Administration's timetable for Iraq, and they may spark large street protests that could turn violent, but they will demonstrate that Sistani is indeed leading the faithful toward a democratic understanding of Muslim mores.

Sistani's efforts build on the unintentionally democratic consequences of Iran's experience with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. It was in Najaf that Khomeini perfected his political theory of a cleric-led Islamic revolution. He lived in Najaf from 1965 to 1978, when Iran's Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi unwisely had Saddam Hussein boot him out of Iraq; Najaf was too close for comfort for Pahlavi. Khomeini and his lieutenants moved to a Paris suburb, where, no longer under Iraqi surveillance, they let loose a torrent of anti-Shah propaganda by radio, cassette, telephone, and fax—and soon showed that the Islamic clergy could call a king to account. Khomeini trans-

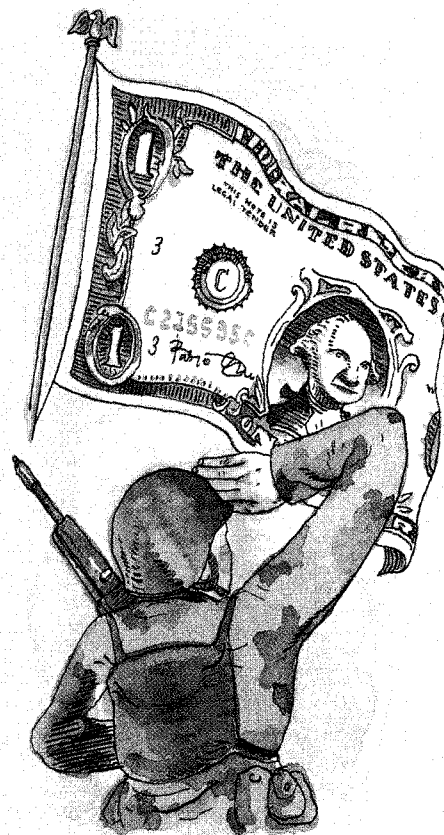
THE LIST

PRIVATE MILITARY CONTRACTORS

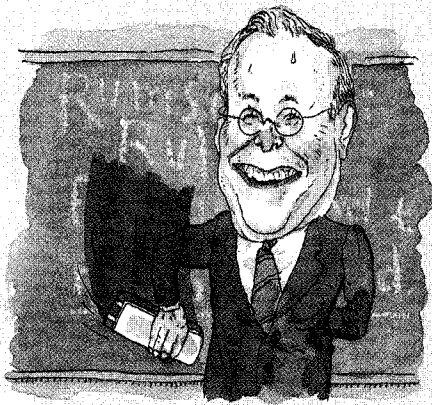
A buyer's guide

The Iraq occupation—particularly the events in Fallujah and at Abu Ghraib—has introduced Americans to a newly prevalent kind of warrior: private corporate soldiers. Roughly 20,000 of them work alongside the coalition in Iraq—ten times as many per military soldier as served in the 1991 Gulf War. Blackwater USA and other private firms offer services ranging from feeding the troops to armed combat. According to P. W. Singer, the author of *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*, their pay ranges from \$250 a month for Kurdish fighters to \$1,000 a day for former Green Berets. The growth of these companies over the past decade is attributable to several factors: a trend toward outsourcing in business and government, the overextension of the U.S. military, and the increased frequency of conflict in a post-Cold War world. Here are some notable private contracts from the past decade, ranked by cost. —MATTHEW QUIRK

1. Supplying and training the Saudi National Guard, the elite forces that protect the Saudi monarchy and maintain stability, \$831 million for five years (1998): Vinnell Corp.
2. Providing security for the Program Management Office monitoring the reconstruction effort in Iraq, \$293 million for three years (2004): Aegis Defense Services. The contract calls for up to 75 two-man security teams trained in "mobile vehicle warfare" and "counter-sniping," and puts Aegis in charge of coordinating all the private security contractors in Iraq.
3. Leading an attempt to overthrow the Nigerian government of General Sani Abacha, \$100 million (1998): Executive Outcomes declined the offer. Abacha died of natural causes that same year.
4. Providing a security detail for Afghan President Hamid Karzai, \$52 million (2003): DynCorp.
5. Creating a new Iraqi police force, \$50 million for the first year (2003): DynCorp.
6. Training a new Iraqi army, \$48 million (2003): Vinnell Corp. The contract called for Vinnell to train nine battalions; more than half of the first completed battalion later abandoned the army.
7. Protecting Iraq's oil pipeline, \$39.2 million (2003–present): Erinyes International. The job requires 14,500 guards.
8. Defending Sierra Leone's capital, repelling an invading rebel army, and storming its stronghold, \$35 million (1995–1997): Executive Outcomes. While under contract Executive Outcomes defeated two violent coup attempts by the rebel army. Meanwhile, the firm allowed a quieter internal coup by a third party to succeed; this brought to power a head of state more sympathetic to Executive Outcomes.
9. Providing interrogation services in Iraq, \$19.9 million (2003–present): CACI Systems. At least two contractors, one from CACI and one from Titan Corp., have been implicated in the Abu Ghraib scandal.
10. Providing a team of former New Zealand special-ops soldiers to rescue a businessman held hostage in East Timor, \$220,000 (2000): Onix International.



RUMSFELD'S RULES REVISITED



Shortly after Donald Rumsfeld was appointed Secretary of Defense, the Department of Defense Web site posted a list of "Rumsfeld's Rules" for "government, business and life." The rules, which the new Secretary had begun touting in the mid-1970s, while serving as chief of staff for President Gerald Ford, were frequently cited as a blueprint for Rumsfeld's managerial style.

Over the past few years Rumsfeld's Rules have drifted away from public attention. Below are a few that seem worth revisiting. —ROSS DOUTHAT

- "Establish good relations between the departments of Defense and State, the National Security Council, CIA and the Office of Management and Budget."
- "Don't divide the world into 'them' and 'us.' Avoid infatuation with or resentment of the press, the Congress, rivals, or opponents. Accept them as facts. They have their jobs and you have yours."
- "Don't do or say things you would not like to see on the front page of the *Washington Post*."
- "If you foul up, tell the president and correct it fast. Delay only compounds mistakes."
- "Be able to resign. It will improve your value to the president and do wonders for your performance."
- "Your performance depends on your people. Select the best, train them, and back them. When errors occur, give sharper guidance. If errors persist or if the fit feels wrong, help them move on."
- "It is easier to get into something than to get out of it."

formed the Shiite clergy into an organized vanguard to propel the masses into the streets. In 1979 he submitted the idea of an Islamic republic to an up-down popular vote. Regular elections, with some element of competition, are now essential to the regime's conception of its own legitimacy.

But Khomeini was obviously not a democratizer. His goal was to install a ruling clerical elite devoted to the Koranic concept of an absolute God. Once in power, he and his colleagues gutted the Iranian constitution (initially drafted by pro-revolution liberals), removing any meaningful commitment to democracy. In the process he demolished the legitimacy, though not the fact, of absolute clerical rule, thus paving the way for Sistani's current efforts.

Even among those who view Sistani as a stabilizing force in Iraq—he has, after all, reached out to Sunni Arab clerics, has worked against the young anti-American Shiite firebrand Muqtada al-Sadr, and usually recommends cooperation, not confrontation, with the occupation—suspicions about his political intentions abound. Some look askance at his "Persianness." Like many other Shiite clerics in Iraq, he is Iranian by birth and early education. There is something unsettling in many American (and in many secular Iraqi) eyes about the political ascendancy of Persian mullahs, even if they've spent more than fifty years in Iraq. Some people simply don't believe that one of them will ever be able to subordinate Islamic holy law to the ever-changing norms and dictates of democracy.

My view, based on conversations I've had during the past several months with Shiite clerics in Iraq, is more sanguine. In Najaf I met with Izz al-Din al-Hakim, the youngest son of Iraq's second most powerful Shiite cleric. "Khomeini was a great man," Hakim told me evenly, as he guided me through Najaf's twisting walkways to the home in which Khomeini had lived—an old, unpainted, sand-scratched wooden house with small

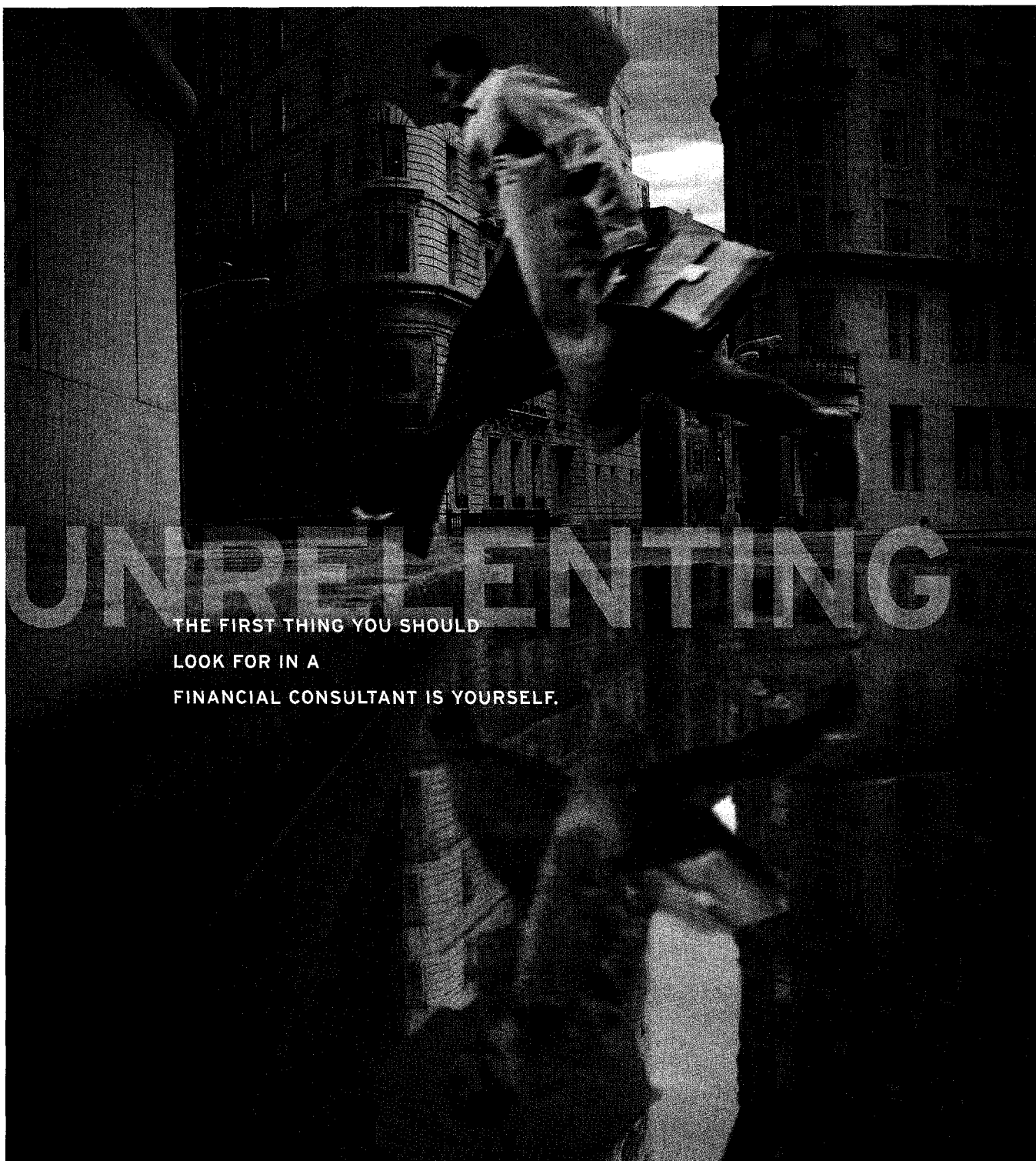
barred windows. "He triumphed over the Shah, who was not a good man to his people. But Khomeini is the past. His way is not the future of Iraq." I also met Sheikh Muhammad al-Haqqani—a highly respected teacher and senior cleric of Iranian origin, who is close to Sistani. At his religious school in Najaf, Haqqani invited me to join a group of Iraqi and Iranian clerics for a spread of lamb, chicken, and river fish. "We want a non-Islamic government that is respectful of Islam," he told me during lunch. "There is a serious discussion of the Islamic Republic and the idea of Islam in Iraq. After Saddam there is a strong desire to have more Islam here. We will not be Turkey. The Turkish Republic is offensive to the idea of Islam. However, very few people want to see an Islamic revolution and the *velayat-e faqih* [Iran's "rule of the jurisconsult"]. There is no strong desire here to copy the Islamic Republic."

The clerics I spoke with were aware of the stakes, at home and abroad. "We need the Americans, but the Americans need us," I was told by Sayyid Ali al-Waiz, a senior Shiite cleric at Baghdad's

Iraq's most influential Shiite cleric is leading the faithful toward a democratic understanding of Muslim mores.

Kadhimein shrine, one of the holiest in Iraq. "Democracy in the Middle East will not be possible without us." Dressed in white, Waiz was bedridden and weak (if not dying) from twenty-three years of detention under Saddam. When I asked about the possibility that an anti-democratic Shiite militancy would gain the upper hand in Iraq, Waiz mildly reproved me: "We are all agents of Sistani, who is our *marja* ['source of emulation'—the highest rank for a Shiite cleric]. He is a rational religious scholar. He wants us to live religious lives, but not have religion dictate politics. We must have democracy, not revolution, in Iraq." ■

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a correspondent for The Atlantic. He is at work on a book about Shiite clerics and Sunni fundamentalists.



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CONVERSATION

Adult-Male-Elephant Diplomacy

Colin Powell talks about Iraq, the Cold War, his place in the Administration, and chilling "the ambitions of the evil"

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

I talked to the Secretary of State in his Office on June 21. He'd recently written, in *Foreign Affairs*, "The sources of national strength and security for one nation need no longer threaten the security of others. Politics need not always be a zero-sum competition." "Zero-sum," a term from game theory, means any gain to you is a loss to me. Forsaking zero-sum is the key to free-market thinking and, as parents know, the key to adult thinking. But then there's geopolitical thinking.

"Yeah," said Secretary Powell, "most of my career was in a zero-sum world: us versus the Russians. Zero-sum kind of takes you to places like Vietnam."

Powell described how zero-sum competition made little sense even within the insensible logic of mutually assured destruction. "Their target was different than ours—two absolutely asymmetrical target problems. But we had exactly the same number of missiles, almost."

Soviet SS-20s and U.S. Pershing IIs were eventually retired, and Powell was on hand when one of each was presented to the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. "The SS-20 was a big thing," he said, "and the Pershing was small. It's much more efficient, a better missile. My wife, Alma, is with me. She pays no attention to any of this military stuff. She's only been a military wife for the past forty years. And she looks at it and she says, 'How come theirs is bigger?'"

"You always want your adversary to walk away thinking he prevails," Powell said. "Not to the point he can boast about it. But if you prevail and he prevails, it's a win—especially in a no-longer-zero-sum world, no longer just the United States versus the Soviet Union, but the whole West and international community against [here the Secretary gave a diplomatic, and apt, name

to what opposes the West] the whole whatever-you-want-to-call-it. I'm considered the multilateralist. Multilateralism means finding areas of compromise. The ugliest form of it is 'You scratch my back ...' As we have discovered, you really need to have friends and partners, and they come with their own needs and their own desires, and you've got to scratch their needs and desires."

So, I asked, is our country in the unique historical position of want-

to do, if they are willing to work for it. And we really do not wish to go to war with people, but, by God, we will have the strongest military around, and that's not a bad thing to have. It encourages and champions our friends that are weak, and it chills the ambitions of the evil."

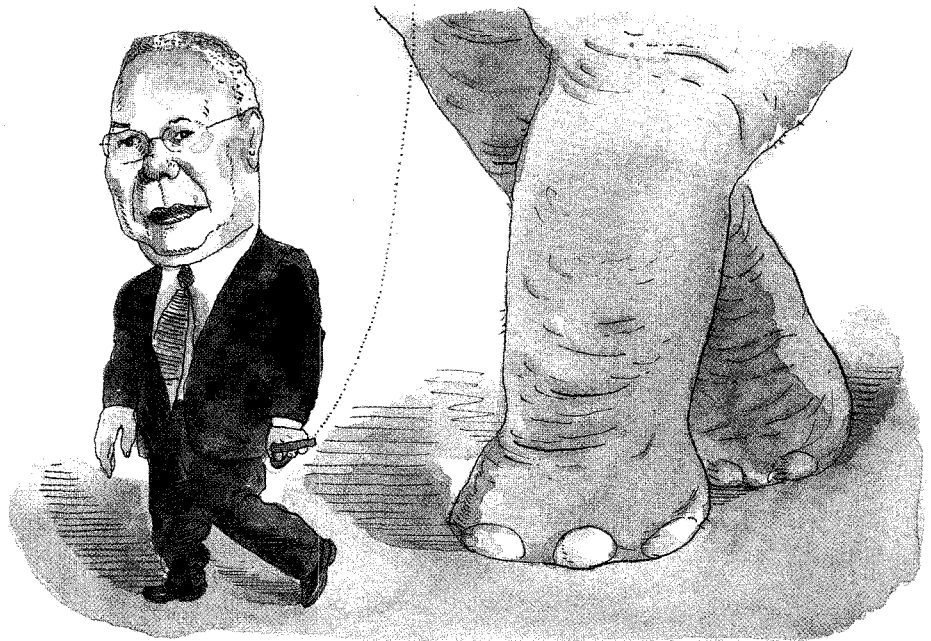
A deputy press secretary interrupted. "That's good," she said. "Did you just make that up?"

"Yeah," Powell said. "Not bad, eh?"

I tried to scribble down the exact words. The deputy press secretary offered me a tape. "A humorist," I said, "doesn't do that much note-taking."

"He can make it up too," Powell said.

"I think," he continued, "the world is well served right now with the United States still having the edge on economic power and a heck of a mar-



ing other nations to be as powerful as we are?

The Secretary looked at me over the top of his glasses. "No, I wouldn't say that. I think our historical position is that we are a superpower that cannot be touched in this generation by anyone in terms of military power, economic power, the strength of our political system and our value system. What we would like to see is a greater understanding of the democratic system, the open-market economic system, the rights of men and women to achieve their destiny as God has directed them

gin with respect to military power. The reason for that is that no other nation, with a few exceptions, is yet as well grounded politically in the democratic system as we are, or to be trusted with the kind of military power we have."

"I was thinking," I said, "more about our friends, about the EU. Why aren't they pulling on their oars?"

"The United States believes it has worldwide obligations. Our European friends have never felt that that was their destiny or their obligation. The American people have always been more willing to shoulder this burden.

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The average European citizen, looking around, sees some of these out-of-the-way places like Afghanistan and the Balkans and Iraq. And they're willing to do a little there, but they're not willing to put up to three or four percent of their GDP into defense spending the way we are. But our great strength is the image we still convey to the rest of the world. Notwithstanding all you read about anti-Americanism, people are still standing in line to come here."

Powell said, with a busy man's insouciance toward memoirs, "There's a story I tell a lot—I think it's in my book." In 1990 the head of the Soviet military and his wife visited the United States. They toured various military

"People are mad about our policies," Powell said. "They're not necessarily mad at us."

sites—"He was not the least bit interested," Powell said—but also went to such places as a Cadillac plant and a four-star restaurant. The Soviet general's wife said to Powell's wife, "I'm not envious of what I've seen. I'm just mad. I'm mad that we could have done this and we didn't."

Powell said, "There's respect that we can do it, and people want to learn it from us, but there's also resentment that we can do it. What I find is that people are mad about our policies. They're not necessarily mad at us. As policies are successful, attitudes can be changed."

"Does any of this," I said, "remind you of having a dad?"

"Yeah, and being a teenager," Powell said. "And then at twenty-three, you discover the old geezer was pretty smart."

The civilization of the Middle East is old and smart. I asked why the region is full of political and economic failures. I was about to say, "Does the oppression of women ... ?" but Powell was already answering.

"To keep the women occupied they let them go to schools, to universities in the United States. Then they bring them home and say, 'Go back in your house and sit there.' That doesn't work.

You open Pandora's box. Moreover, you can't have fifty percent of your population that just sits around providing services for the other fifty percent."

I said, "If I started acting like the Iraqis in Baghdad, my wife would be after me: 'You get right in here and stop blowing up the car. If you blow up the car, how can I get the kids to school?'"

"I don't want to lay it all off on women," Powell said. He talked about an African game reserve where rhinos were being killed by young male elephants introduced from another reserve. "They brought two adult male elephants in with these teenagers, and within a few months, problem solved. The teenagers didn't know how to act.

The male elephants made it clear to them: 'Excuse me, boy. This is not what elephants do. We don't go around chomping on rhinoc-

eri.' But I've seen this in schools in Washington, D.C., where there are young men who do not know the taboos of the family, the shibboleths of the society, the need for self-restraint. That's what drill sergeants do. Young recruits hate their drill sergeant. They want to kill him. By the eighth week they'll do anything to please him, and they will never forget his name. I was having dinner with Ted Kennedy once, we were kidding around, and I said, 'Ted, what was the name of your drill sergeant?'"

Senator Kennedy remembered—"instantly," Powell said.

Leaving aside the question of whether that sergeant should have been retained on the Kennedy family payroll, I asked if the Secretary saw parallels between the beginning of the Cold War and the beginning of the war on terrorism.

"I think there's something to that," Powell said. "A dawning recognition of a new kind of threat. We really have to see this not just as a temporary aberration that's going to go away. I mean, it took the Cold War forty years. One of my colleagues thought that all you had to do was détente them forever. But Reagan said no, they're evil."

He continued, "Maybe we should

never have characterized this thing as something that would be a tough fight but then it would all be over."

"I don't think anyone did say that," I said.

"I didn't," Powell said, but he also said, "The feeling grew." He said, "Everyone thinks all you do is sit in a room and design policy and that's it. But if you look at the experiences of World War II and the Cold War, there was a great deal of trial and error—or, as I like to call it, 'audibling.' No military plan survives first contact with a real enemy. Who was it who said it? Was it Clemens? Some humorist. 'Even the most brilliant strategist must occasionally take into account the presence of an enemy.'"

I asked if we were so worried about terrorism that we were failing to worry about other worrying things. The Secretary seemed to feel that the President and the Department of State were sufficiently worried. "I actually meant the public," I said.

"I think the public is worrying too much about terrorism. Now everybody is running around saying they're going to be bombing all of the shopping centers."

What about nations that are trying to decouple economic freedom from political liberty?

"Yes," he said, "without naming countries, we're nervous about this trend. But I don't think it works. Because if you are going to be economically successful, you can't really constrain your people too much. You've got to turn them loose. They may originally start out being robber barons, but so did we."

The Secretary is optimistic that all nations will see the mutually advantageous, non-zero-sum nature of free markets and democracy. He talked about two poor countries, struggling with issues of political freedom. "They almost like it when I lecture them," Powell said, with just a hint of the adult male elephant in his voice. "Because they've got to be able to go home and say to people, 'This is what the guy told me.'"

P. J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for The Atlantic. His book Peace Kills, a survey of post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy, has just been published.

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**General Motors Corp. - Lansing Grand River, MI (Car) plant was the highest ranked and the General Motors Corp. - Hamtramck, MI plant was the second highest ranked in North/South America among plants producing vehicles for the U.S. market. J.D. Power and Associates 2003-2004 Initial Quality StudiesSM 2004 Study based on a total of 51,208 U.S. consumer responses including owner reported problems during the first 90 days of ownership. www.jdpower.com

Primary Sources

The U.S. prison system as a terrorist university; why the suburbs make you fat; the "happiness-maximizing" number of sex partners

SOCIETY

"Prison Islam"

Which is more likely to breed anti-Americanism and radical Islam—an American-run prison in Iraq, or an American-run prison in America? The depredations at Abu Ghraib notwithstanding, a report from the Department of Justice suggests that the answer may be the latter. Despite recent cautionary examples like Jose Padilla, who is believed to have been radicalized in prison before allegedly plotting to detonate a dirty bomb (the shoe bomber Richard Reid is thought to have been similarly radicalized in a British prison), the Justice Department reports that safeguards against religious extremism in federal prisons are still remarkably lax. No national Islamic organization is currently authorized by the Bureau of Prisons to approve new Muslim chaplains, which has led to an acute clerical shortage. There is currently only one chaplain for every 900 Muslim inmates, and no new Muslim chaplains have been hired since 2001. This gap is being filled by inmate-led prayer sessions—and inmates, according to interviews with prison officials and Muslim chaplains, are likely to radicalize their fellow prisoners, urging them to overthrow the U.S. government (because "Muslims aren't cowards," as one group of converts was taught) and preaching a breed of "Prison Islam" that distorts Koranic

teaching to promote violence and gang loyalty. France has already seen the results of a similar trend, the report notes. In French prisons inmates exercise considerable control over Muslim worship, creating a "terrorist university" that spreads anti-Semitic and anti-Western tapes, books, and pamphlets throughout the penal system.

—"A Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers," Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General

Ranking the Rich

When the Center for Global Development ranked rich countries' commitment to fighting global poverty in 2003—taking into account trade, immigration, investment, peacekeeping, foreign-aid, and environmental-protection policies—the United States came in a miserable twentieth out of twenty-one nations. The 2003 index, however, drew complaints of unfairness and inaccuracy. According to a *Washington Post* columnist, it considered only "multilateral" peacekeeping, ignoring the missions America takes on alone; it measured gross rather than net immigration levels, giving an unfair boost to Switzerland and other countries that admit numerous foreign workers only to kick them out later; and it excluded private foreign-aid donations, which some U.S. tax incentives encourage. In this year's "Ranking the Rich" index, which corrects for

these and other factors, the United States rises to a four-way tie for seventh place—still behind global good cops like Sweden and Canada, but even with France and Germany, and way ahead of Japan (which ranked dead last for the second year running). Judging from the rankings, America excels at helping the developing world indirectly, through trade policies that

benefit developing nations and through its easygoing (or at least loosely enforced) immigration laws. When it comes to direct aid, the United States is far stingier, coming in nineteenth on the index, ahead of only Greece and New Zealand. And on environmental policies the United States ranks last.

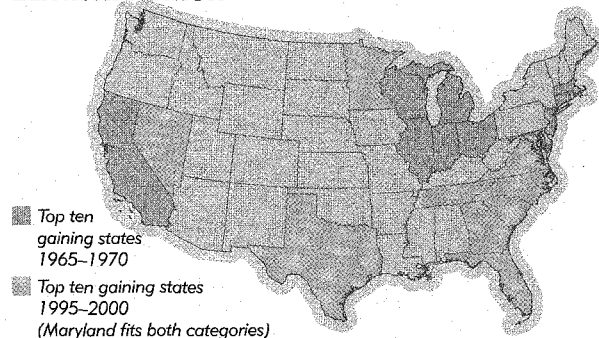
—"Ranking the Rich: The 2004 Commitment to Development Index," Center for Global Development/Foreign Policy

THE NATION

Go South, Young Man

Over the first two thirds of the twentieth century black Americans abandoned the South in droves, producing a "great migration" northward in search of manufacturing jobs and more social equality. Now a Brookings Institution analysis suggests that a reverse "great migration" seems to be picking up speed, driven by an improved economic and racial climate in the South and the strong cultural and familial connections that many blacks still feel with the region. According to Brookings, migration accounted for a net gain of more than 600,000 black residents in the South from 1975 to 2000, while the rest of the country lost black residents.

BLACK MIGRATION



College-educated blacks are leading the way southward, and the biggest beneficiaries of the shifting migration patterns and attendant "brain gain" are booming "New South" cities such as Atlanta, Charlotte, and Memphis. But the trend extends across all the southern states except Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi—and even in those states the outflow of blacks has slowed dramatically over the past decade. Meanwhile, cities in the Rust Belt and the Northeast, in particular, have been losing black residents for some time, and California's long reign as a "black migrant magnet" seems to have ended. From 1965 to 1970 and again from 1975 to 1980 California's net gain of black residents was greater than any other state's; in the last five years of the 1990s, however, its net loss of black residents was larger than that of any other state except New York.

—"The New Great Migration: Black Americans' Return to the South, 1965-2000," William H. Frey, Brookings Institution



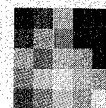
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The Immigrant Lifestyle Bonus

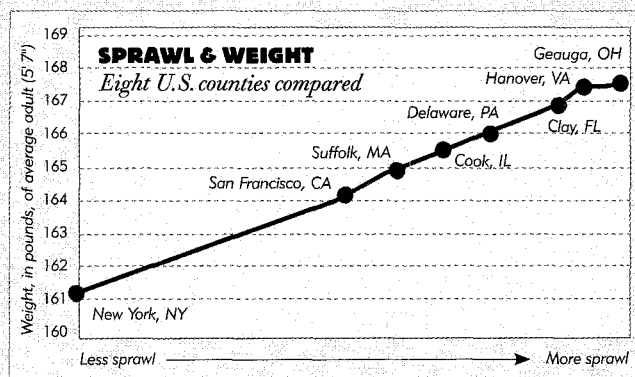
Immigrants to the United States may not necessarily find a better life than the one they left behind, but they are likely to enjoy a longer one—longer even than native-born Americans, according to research published recently in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. Male and female immigrants to the United States live 3.4 and 2.5 years longer, respectively, than their U.S.-born counterparts, and that gap widens dramatically in the black and Hispanic populations. Whereas U.S.-born black men have a life expectancy of 64, their immigrant counterparts live to an average age of 73; and whereas U.S.-born Hispanic men live to 73, on average, their immigrant counterparts have a life expectancy of around 77. This gap—which prevails even though immigrants are poorer, less likely to have health insurance, and less likely to visit doctors than the general population—may reflect the tendency of immigrants to be among the healthier people in their country of origin; immigrants also have better dietary habits than the U.S. population as a whole, and they smoke and drink less. (According to the National Institutes of Health, black immigrants are one third as likely to be smokers as American-born blacks.) But these advantages seem to erode over time; as immigrants acculturate to the United States and, presumably, adopt the unhealthful habits associated with life in their new country, their chances of disability and chronic illness increase.

—“Health, Life Expectancy, and Mortality Patterns Among Immigrant Populations in the United States,” Gopal K. Singh and Barry A. Miller, *Canadian Journal of Public Health*

Sprawling Suburb, Hidden Belt Buckle

Forget McDonald's—it's the leafy avenues and spreading parking lots of suburbia that are to blame for America's obesity epidemic. According to an exhaustive new study examining the link between population density and health in 448 American counties, the residents of the country's more sprawling counties tend to be heavier and have more weight-related chronic illnesses—particularly high blood pressure—than the residents of more densely populated counties. The study relied on a U.S. Census-based “Sprawl Index” that assigned the lowest numerical scores to the most sprawling counties (352 points for crowded New York County; 63 points for suburban Geauga County, outside Cleveland), and found that for every fifty-point increase in the degree of sprawl, the odds of a county resident's being obese rose by 10 percent. Cities encourage walking and physical fitness, the authors argue, whereas suburban homes are so far from friends, stores, and workplaces that even the most health-conscious residents are forced off the sidewalk and behind the wheel.

—“Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl,” Barbara A. McCann, Reid Ewing, Smart Growth America



Alabama, France of the South

If the European Union were a U.S. state, it would rank forty-seventh in per capita GDP, according to a report from Timbro, a Swedish free-market think tank. (Yes, there really is one.) In annual income the average European is on a par with residents of Mississippi, West Virginia, and Arkansas. (And the report excludes the newer, poorer EU nations of Eastern Europe.) The picture isn't much rosier even in wealthier European states like France and Britain, both of which have per capita GDPs slightly lower than Alabama's. Only tiny Luxembourg scores better than the

American average. The United States' material advantage extends beyond income: Americans spend 77 percent more annually than Europeans, own more appliances, and (presumably thanks to our wide open spaces) have homes providing, on average, 721 square feet per person—nearly twice the average size of European residences. The study's authors allow that fast-growing GDP is “not the be all and end all of happiness and prosperity,” citing more “intangible” (and quintessentially European) factors such as equality, leisure time, and the environment. But they note, with a defensiveness undoubtedly endemic among Swedish

free-marketeers, that “material resources” are a “precondition of much of the wellbeing which people like to call intangible.”

—“EU versus USA,” Fredrik Bergström and Robert Gidehag, *Timbro*

CULTURE

Can't Buy Me Sex

Monogamy is the key to a thriving sex life, according to a National Bureau of Economic Research study aimed at quantifying the links among income, sex, and general happiness. Married people have considerably more sex than swinging singles and gay divorcees, and the “happiness-maximizing” number of sexual partners in a given year is almost exactly one. Rising wealth has no positive effect on the frequency of sex, and increased education actually has a slightly negative effect, particularly among men. (This is unfortunate news for the well-educated, since they are the group for whom sexual activity has the highest impact on happiness.) Strikingly, men consistently report more sexual activity than women do. Unless a disproportionate number of men in the sample population are gay or visit prostitutes, it “is not easy to see how this gender difference can be genuine,” the authors write; they gently suggest that this discrepancy may be attributable to “exaggerated memories” among the male population.

—“Money, Sex, and Happiness: An Empirical Study,” David G. Blanchflower and Andrew J. Oswald, NBER

For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/2004/09/primarysources.htm



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The God Vote

The significance of the religion gap

Is there a "religion gap" in American politics? At first blush the answer seems to be a resounding yes. In recent years church attendance and religious intensity have become increasingly accurate predictors of voting behavior. In the 2000 election, for instance, frequent churchgoers went for George W. Bush by wide margins (weekly attendees by 57 to 40 percent, and more-frequent attendees by 63 to 36 percent), whereas those who never attend religious services voted overwhelmingly for Al Gore. And recent survey data from the Pew Research Center indicate that allegiance to the Republican Party increasingly correlates with high levels of religious intensity, especially among white voters.

This gap reflects a large-scale religious realignment in national politics. For much of American history denominations tended to align themselves with whichever party they happened to resemble most closely in class and ethnic composition. For example, Catholics—who tended to be working-class immigrants—lined up with the Democratic Party; the Episcopal Church—whose parishioners tended to be business-minded members of the Anglo-Saxon establishment—was once dubbed "the Republican Party at prayer." Today, however, the old religious coalitions have fractured, as traditionalists reach across denominational lines to make common cause—at least on religiously charged issues such as abortion and gay rights—with fellow traditionalists in doctrinally different communities; secularists and religious liberals are doing the same.

The result is a religiously divided political landscape: on one side a Republican Party increasingly composed of religious traditionalists and centrists; on the other a Democratic coalition of religious liberals, devout secularists, and the religiously indifferent. This shift has been remark-

THE GODLESS NORTHWEST

The Pacific Northwest may be the country's most secular region: just 31 percent of Oregonians and 33 percent of Washingtonians—the lowest percentages in the country—are affiliated with religious denominations. Five of the fifteen most secular U.S. metropolitan areas are in the Pacific Northwest, including not only Seattle but also America's most godless locale: Medford, Oregon.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION CLAIMED BY ALL RELIGIOUS GROUPS*

- 75% or more
- 55–74.9%
- 45–54.9%
- 35–44.9%
- 0.1–34.9%

*Among the 149 denominations that agreed to participate

LATTER-DAY REPUBLICANS

The Mormon Church continues to be the fastest-growing denomination in the United States, having gained 680,000 new adherents in the 1990s. This is good news for the Republican Party, since 88 percent of Mormons who voted in 2000 went for George W. Bush. Mormons are also among the country's most reliable voters; their turnout rates are exceeded only by those of Jews.

ably rapid, and was made possible in large part by the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a long period of economic expansion. Together these events made the old hot-button issues—poverty, racial segregation, anti-communism—seem less significant to voters. Meanwhile, the sexual revolution had over the previous two decades brought social and moral issues to the fore. Party activists and politicians alike had a strong incentive to use these latter issues to forge reliable voting blocs: the religious right on the one hand and what Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio, political scientists at Baruch College, term "anti-fundamentalists" on the other. (Anti-fundamentalists are typically secularists or religious liberals whose political behavior is influenced by a deep antipathy toward religious conservatives; they made up 35 percent of Gore's white voters in 2000.)

CATHOLICISM'S CHANGING FACE

Already the nation's largest denomination, the Catholic Church saw its numbers in America grow by 16 percent from 1990 to 2000, to more than 60 million. Much of this growth derives from immigration, which is causing a dramatic shift from the old urban Church of the Northeast and the Midwest (where the Catholic population grew by just four or five percent over the past decade) to the new Hispanic Church of the South and the West (where the number of Catholics grew by 30 and 42 percent, respectively, during the same period).

These blocs, in turn, used their increasing clout to push the two major parties away from the political center, by eschewing a big-tent approach and demanding agreement on contentious social issues. One illustration of this trend has been the effective demise of the pro-life Democrat. According to the advocacy group Democrats for Life of America, in the 1977–1978 session

THE PIOUS DAKOTAS

Along with Utah and the District of Columbia, the Dakotas have the highest percentage of residents affiliated with a religious denomination—around 70 percent. By this measure Bismarck, North Dakota, is the third most religious metropolitan area in the country, trailing only Provo, Utah, and Lafayette, Louisiana.

ISLAM RISING?

Estimates of the Islamic population in the United States range from 1.6 million to seven million. Even by the lower estimate Islam is on its way to outstripping the dwindling mainline Protestant denominations. New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago already have more than twice as many Muslims as Episcopalians.

THE BAPTIST BELT

The South is Baptist country: the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest denomination in eight of the eleven states of the old Confederacy, and also in Kentucky and Oklahoma. These ten states, along with Methodist-heavy West Virginia, are the only ones in which any single Protestant denomination can claim more adherents than the Roman Catholic Church.

of Congress 42 percent of the 292-member Democratic House majority voted pro-life. Today 15 percent of the 204-seat Democratic minority votes pro-life.

But the disproportionate influence of voting blocs at either end of the religious-political spectrum obscures the existence of a still strong center. For instance, on some markers of religious faith the political divide diminishes sharply: Democrats are nearly as likely as Republicans to express a basic belief in God or an afterlife; and frequency of prayer seems to have no correlation

with political affiliation. Similarly, the percentage of the population affiliated with a religious denomination—as documented by the Glenmary Research Center, in Nashville, whose data are reproduced in the map on these pages—tracks only roughly with the famous red state–blue state divide.

Although the Republicans retain a strong electoral advantage among the churchgoing, the persistence of a large and bipartisan religious center should provide comfort for Democrats worried that their party has become alienated from America's religious mainstream. Moreover, although it's true that a

recent rise in the country's overall religious intensity has buttressed the huge majorities that believe in God, Judgment Day, and the power of prayer, this rise has coincided with the spread of laissez-faire attitudes on matters of personal morality.

Americans still frown on adultery and teenage sex, but they largely accept divorce and premarital cohabitation, strongly support sex education in schools, and are increasingly tolerant of homosexuality (albeit not yet to the point of endorsing gay marriage). And although a majority of Americans still express strong support for “old-fashioned” values regarding marriage and family, they also express increasing tolerance for those who do not share their values. A gap persists, of course, between the values of secular Americans and those of intensely religious Americans. But that gap is not widening—and both groups are growing more tolerant.

In short, the data seem to support a theory put forth a few years ago by Alan Wolfe, a sociologist at Boston College: Americans are increasingly governed by a philosophy of “moral freedom,” in which a general piety coexists with a distaste for dogma and a willingness to accept a broad spectrum of viewpoints and lifestyles. In a country where moral freedom predominates, the long-term electoral advantage will probably go to the party that avoids the appearance of extremism, be it secular or religious.

—ROSS DOUTHAT

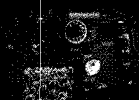
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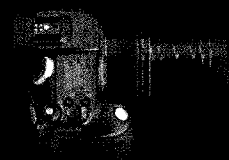
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INSIDE AL-QAEDA'S HARD DRIVE

A fortuitous discovery reveals budget squabbles, baby pictures, office rivalries—and the path to 9/11

BY ALAN CULLISON

.....

In the autumn of 2001 I was one of scores of journalists who ventured into northern Afghanistan to write about the U.S.-assisted war against the Taliban. As I crossed the Hindu Kush to cover the fighting for *The Wall Street Journal*, my journey took what looked like a fatal turn: the battered black pickup truck I had rented—which in its better years had been a war wagon for Afghan gunmen—lost its brakes as it headed down a steep mountain path, careened along the edge of a gorge, slammed headlong into the back of a Northern Alliance fuel truck that was creeping down the mountain, and slid to rest on its side in the middle of the road. My bags spilled down the mountainside or were crushed beneath the pickup.

Fortunately, none of the pickup's occupants—a Japanese journalist, two Afghan interpreters, the driver, and a shoeless boy who had been riding on the roof and wiping dust from the windshield—was seriously injured. Only my interpreter, a Russian-speaking Afghan, seemed to be hurt; he clutched his side and said that something had hit him in the ribs. We nursed some cuts and bruises, and climbed aboard a Northern Alliance truck carrying wooden crates of Kalashnikov ammunition.

The wreck might have been just a minor bump in my travels through a land where inhabitants display a whoopsydaisy attitude toward fatal accidents and killings. But a day later, after bedding down forty miles north of Kabul, I asked my interpreter what had hit him in the ribs. He said it was my computer, which he'd always held in his lap for safekeeping. I got up and removed the computer from its black bag, opened its lid, and saw that the screen was smashed. In the coming weeks, living in a fly-infested hut, I scrawled stories by candlelight with a ballpoint pen and read dispatches to my editors over a satellite phone.

That crash became memorable for reasons I never expected. When the Taliban's defenses crumbled, in November of 2001, I joined a handful of malnourished correspondents who rushed into Kabul and filed stories about the city's liberation. We pounced like so many famished crows on the first Western staples we had seen since leaving home:

peanut butter, pasteurized milk, and canned vegetables, all of which we found on Chicken Street, Kabul's version of a shopping district. We raided the houses where Arab members of al-Qaeda had been holed up during their stay in Afghanistan, grabbing whatever documents were left in their file cabinets. But unlike most correspondents, I needed to spend some time getting to know Kabul's computer dealers, because I wanted to replace my laptop. It took about an hour to shake hands with all of them.

The regime that had forbidden television and kite-flying as un-Islamic had also taken a dim view of computers. I searched through the bazaars and found Soviet-era radios and television sets, but the electronics dealers had never even seen a computer, and certainly didn't know how to wire one to a satellite phone.

I found my first computer dealer in a drafty storefront office in downtown Kabul, near the city's central park. He worked alone and didn't have a computer in his office, because, he said, he couldn't afford one. He bragged that he was the sole computer consultant for the Afghan national airline, Ariana. This impressed me deeply—until I learned that Ariana had only one computer and only one working airplane.

He told me about another dealer, who ran a computer training school on the second floor of a building overlooking the park. I fumbled my way up a decrepit, unlit stairwell and along a dusty hallway to an office: a long room with a threadbare couch and a desk with a computer on it.

The second dealer told me that he had serviced computers belonging to the Taliban and to Arabs in al-Qaeda. I forgot about my own computer problems and hired him to search for these computers. Eventually he led me to a semiliterate jewelry salesman with wide-set eyes and a penchant for gold chains. This was the man who that December would take \$1,100 from me in exchange for two of al-Qaeda's most valuable computers—a 40-gigabyte IBM desktop and a Compaq laptop. He had stolen them from al-Qaeda's central office in Kabul on November 12, the night before the city fell to the Northern Alliance. He wanted the money, he said, so that he could travel to the United States and meet some American girls.

Alan Cullison is a Moscow correspondent for The Wall Street Journal and a Nieman fellow at Harvard University.

My acquisition of the al-Qaeda computers was unique in the experience of journalists covering radical Islam. In the 1990s the police had seized computers used by al-Qaeda members in Kenya and the Philippines, but journalists and historians learned very little about the contents of those computers; only some information from them was released in U.S. legal proceedings. A much fuller picture would emerge from the computers I obtained in Kabul (especially the IBM desktop), which had been used by al-Qaeda's leadership.

On the night before Kabul fell, Taliban officials were fleeing the city in trucks teetering with their personal effects. The looter who sold me the computers figured that al-Qaeda had fled as well, so he crawled over a brick wall surrounding the house that served as the group's office. Finding nobody inside, he took the two computers, which he had discovered in a room on the building's second floor. On the door of the room, he said, was the name of Muhammad Atef—al-Qaeda's military commander and a key planner of 9/11. Each day, he said, Atef would walk into the office carrying the laptop in its black case. The looter knew he had something good.

So did the U.S. military when it heard what I had bought. The offices of *The Wall Street Journal*, just across from the World Trade Center, had been destroyed on 9/11. Our New York staff, which was working out of a former warehouse in Lower Manhattan, was acutely aware of potential threats; it was carefully screening mail for anthrax. Thinking that the computers might hold information about future attacks, my editors called the U.S. Central Command, which sent three CIA agents to my hotel room in Kabul. They said they needed the computers immediately; I had time to copy only the desktop computer before handing them both over. Atef's laptop was returned to me two months later, by an agent named Bert, at a curbside in Washington, D.C. The CIA said that the drive had been almost empty, but I've always wondered if this was true.

The desktop computer, it turned out, had been used mostly by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's top deputy. It contained nearly a thousand text documents, dating back to 1997. Many were locked with passwords or encrypted. Most were in Arabic, but some were in French, Farsi, English, or Malay, written in an elliptical and evolving system of code words. I worked intensively for more than a year with several translators and with a colleague at *The Wall Street Journal*, Andrew Higgins, interviewing dozens of former *jihadis* to decipher the context, codes, and intentions of the messages for a series of articles that Higgins and I wrote for the *Journal* in 2002.

What emerged was an astonishing inside look at the day-to-day world of al-Qaeda, as managed by its top strategic planners—among them bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, Atef, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, all of whom were intimately involved in the planning of 9/11, and some of whom (bin Laden and al-Zawahiri) are still at large. The documents included budgets, training manuals for recruits, and scouting reports for international attacks, and they shed light on everything from personnel matters and petty bureaucratic sniping to theological discussions and debates about the merits of suicide operations. There were also video files, photographs, scanned documents, and Web pages, many of which, it became clear, were part of the group's increasingly sophisticated efforts to conduct a global Internet-based publicity and recruitment effort.



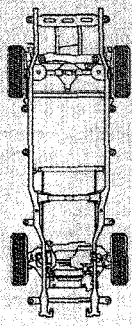
The desktop computer contained hundreds of Web pages, this one a diatribe against the Saudi royal family. The man in flames, wearing a crusader cross, appears to be a member of the House of Saud

The *jihadis'* Kabul office employed a zealous manager—Ayman al-Zawahiri's brother Muhammad, who maintained the computer's files in a meticulous network of folders and subfolders that neatly laid out the group's organizational structure and strategic concerns. (Muhammad's system fell apart after he was arrested in 2000 in Dubai and extradited to Egypt.) The files not only provided critical active intelligence about the group's plans and methods at the time (including the first leads about the shoe bomber Richard Reid, who had yet to attempt his attack) but also, in a fragmentary way, revealed a road map of al-Qaeda's progress toward 9/11. Considered as a whole, the trove of material on the computer represents what is surely the fullest sociological profile of al-Qaeda ever to be made public.

Perhaps one of the most important insights to emerge from the computer is that 9/11 sprang not so much from al-Qaeda's strengths as from its weaknesses. The computer



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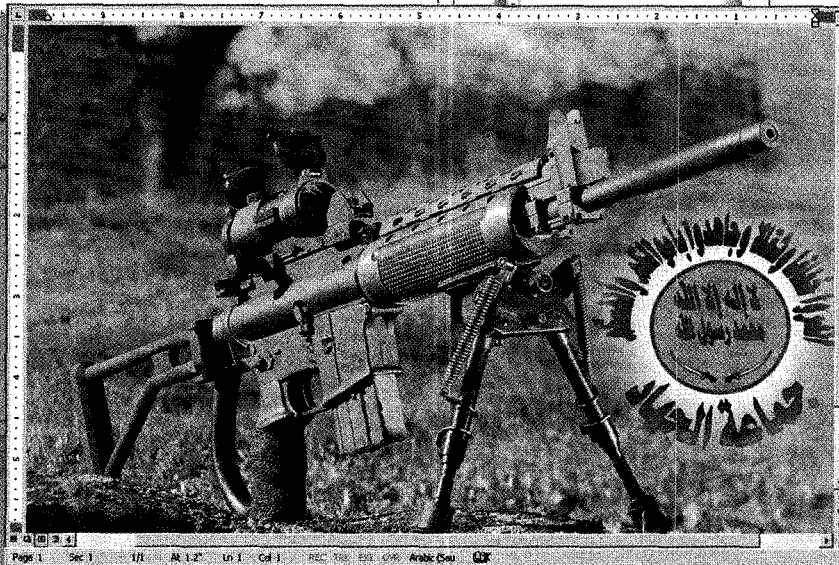
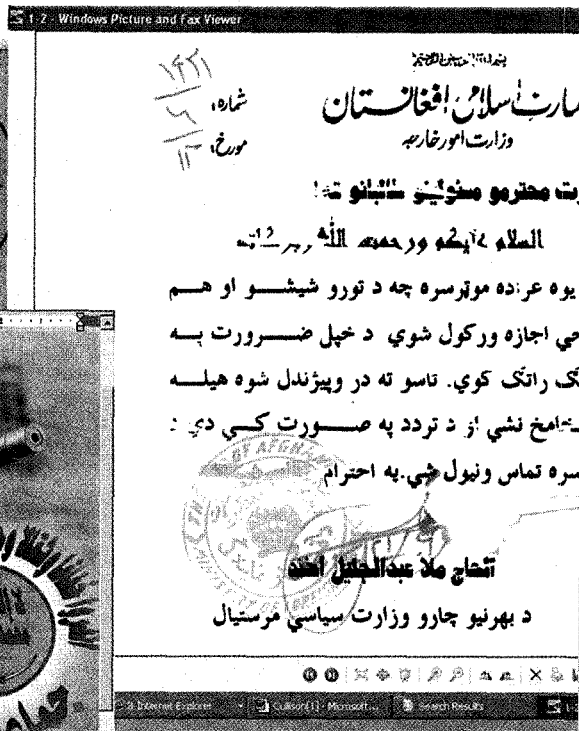
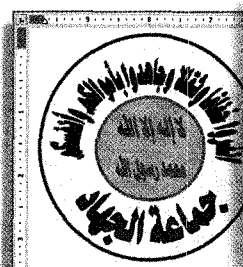
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did not reveal any links to Iraq or any other deep-pocketed government; amid the group's penury the members fell to bitter infighting. The blow against the United States was meant to put an end to the internal rivalries, which are manifest in vitriolic memos between Kabul and cells abroad. Al-Qaeda's leaders worried about a military response from the United States, but in such a response they spied opportunity: they had fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and they fondly remembered that war as a galvanizing experience, an event that roused the indifferent of the Arab world to fight and win against a technologically superior Western infidel. The *jihadis* expected the United States, like the Soviet Union, to be a clumsy opponent. Afghanistan would again become a slowly filling graveyard for the imperial ambitions of a superpower.

Like the early Russian anarchists who wrote some of the most persuasive tracts on the uses of terror, al-Qaeda understood that its attacks would not lead to a quick collapse of the great powers. Rather, its aim was to tempt the powers to strike back in a way that would create sympathy for the terrorists. Al-Qaeda has so far gained little from the ground war in Afghanistan; the conflict in Iraq, closer to the center of the Arab world, is potentially more fruitful. As Arab resentment against the United States spreads, al-Qaeda may look less like a tightly knit terror group and more like a mass movement. And as the group develops synergy in working with other groups branded by the United States as enemies (in Iraq,

the Israeli-occupied territories, Kashmir, the Mindanao Peninsula, and Chechnya, to name a few places), one wonders if the United States is indeed playing the role written for it on the computer.

LIFE IN AFGHANISTAN

Al-Qaeda's leaders began decamping to Afghanistan in 1996, after the group was expelled from Sudan. Ayman al-Zawahiri, at the time also the leader of the militant Egyptian group Islamic Jihad, issued a call for other Islamists to follow, and in one letter found on the computer described Afghanistan as a "den of garri-soned lions." But not all Arabs were happy with the move. Afghanistan, racked by more than a decade of civil war and Soviet occupation, struck many as unfit to be the capital of global *jihad*. *Jihadis* complained about the food, the bad roads, and the Afghans themselves, who, they said, were uneducated, venal, and not to be trusted.

In April of 1998 a *jihadi* named Tariq Anwar visited Afghanistan for a meeting of Islamists and wrote back to his colleagues in Yemen about his impressions.

TO: Al-Qaeda Members in Yemen
FROM: Tariq Anwar
FOLDER: Outgoing Mail—To Yemen
DATE: April 1998

I send you my greetings from beyond the swamps to your country, where there is progress and civilization ... You should excuse us for not calling. There are many reasons,



د افغانستان اسلامي

پښتو سوله مېلمانه غږ
د خپل امنیت لپاره د
وخت کې د داخل
دو جبهه د فزاحست د
نصرت مرکز ۱ مخا



The desktop computer was used for tasks ranging from creating public-relations material to scanning and storing baby pictures, presumably of the children of jihadis. The documents shown here include a travel pass issued by the Taliban foreign ministry for an unnamed "armed Arab guest" (1); an announcement of a conference in Afghanistan run by the "University of Jihad" (2); and an identity card for a member of an Islamist group operating in Kurdistan (3)



3

the most important of which is the difficulty of calling from this country. We have to go to the city, which involves a number of stages. The first stage involves arranging for a car (as we don't have a car). Of course, we are bound by the time the car is leaving, regardless of the time we want to leave. The second stage involves waiting for the car (we wait for the car, and it may be hours late or arrive before the agreed time). The next stage is the trip itself, when we sit like sardines in a can. Most of the time I have 1/8 of a chair, and the road is very bad. After all this suffering, the last stage is reaching a humble government communication office. Most of the time there is some kind of failure—either the power is off, the lines out of order, or the neighboring country [through which the connection is made] does not reply. Only in rare cases can we make problem-free calls ...

The Arabs' general contempt for the backwardness of Afghanistan was not lost on the Taliban, whose leaders grew annoyed with Osama bin Laden's focus on public relations and the media. Letters found on the computer reveal that relations between the Arabs and the Taliban had grown so tense that many feared the Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, would expel the Arabs from the country. A dialogue to resolve the two sides' differences was carried on at the highest levels, as the memo below, from two Syrian operatives, demonstrates. ("Abu Abdullah" is a code name for bin Laden; "Leader of the Faithful" refers to Mullah Omar, in his hoped-for capacity as the head of a new Islamic emirate, based in Afghanistan.)

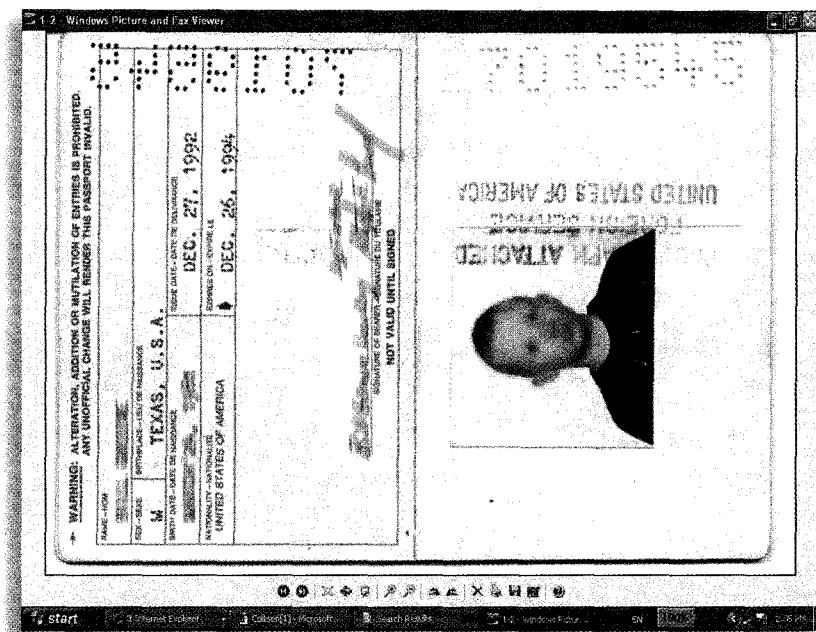
TO: Osama bin Laden
FROM: Abu Mosab al-Suri and Abu Khalid al-Suri
VIA: Ayman al-Zawahiri
FOLDER: Incoming Mail—From Afghanistan
DATE: July 19, 1999

Noble brother Abu Abdullah,
Peace upon you, and God's mercy and blessings.
This message [concerns] the problem between you
and the Leader of the Faithful ...

The results of this crisis can be felt even here in Kabul and other places. Talk about closing down the camps has spread. Discontent with the Arabs has become clear. Whispers between the Taliban with some of our non-Arab brothers has become customary. In short, our brother Abu Abdullah's latest troublemaking with the Taliban and the Leader of the Faithful jeopardizes the Arabs, and the Arab presence, today in all of Afghanistan, for no good reason. It provides a ripe opportunity for all adversaries, including America, the West, the Jews, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the Mas'ud-Dostum alliance, etc., to serve the Arabs a blow that could end up causing their most faithful allies to kick them out ... Our brother [bin Laden] will help our enemies reach their goal free of charge! ...

The strangest thing I have heard so far is Abu Abdullah's saying that he wouldn't listen to the Leader of the Faithful when he asked him to stop giving interviews ... I think our brother [bin Laden] has caught the disease of screens, flashes, fans, and applause ...

The only solution out of this dilemma is what a number of knowledgeable and experienced people have agreed upon ...



Numerous images had been scanned and saved on the desktop computer, including company letterheads, postal seals, identity badges, and this passport. Many of these items were presumably stolen and intended for use by al-Qaeda's forgers

Abu Abdullah should go to the Leader of the Faithful with some of his brothers and tell them that ... the Leader of the Faithful was right when he asked you to refrain from interviews, announcements, and media encounters, and that you will help the Taliban as much as you can in their battle, until they achieve control over Afghanistan. ... You should apologize for any inconvenience or pressure you have caused ... and commit to the wishes and orders of the Leader of the Faithful on matters that concern his circumstances here ...

The Leader of the Faithful, who should be obeyed where he reigns, is Muhammad Omar, not Osama bin Laden. Osama bin Laden and his companions are only guests seeking refuge and have to adhere to the terms laid out by the person who provided it for them. This is legitimate and logical.

The troubled relationship between al-Qaeda and the Taliban hadn't interfered with global plans. Al-Qaeda had developed a growing interest in suicide operations as an offensive weapon against Americans and other enemies around the world. On August 7, 1998, the group simultaneously struck the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania with car bombs, killing more than 220 people and wounding more than 4,000. Concerned that inflicting such heavy casualties on civilians would tarnish its image even among its supporters, al-Qaeda actively sought religious and legal opinions from Islamic scholars around the world who could help to justify the killing of innocents. The following letter is presumably a typical request for theological guidance.

TO: Unknown
FROM: Unknown
FOLDER: Outgoing Mail
DATE: September 26, 1998

Dear highly respected _____

... I present this to you as your humble brother ... concerning the preparation of the lawful study that I am doing on the killing of civilians. This is a very sensitive case—as you know—especially these days ...

It is very important that you provide your opinion of this matter, which has been forced upon us as an essential issue in the course and ideology of the Muslim movement ...

[Our] questions are:

1- Since you are the representative of the Islamic Jihad group, what is your lawful stand on the killing of civilians, specifically when women and children are included? And please explain the legitimate law concerning those who are deliberately killed.

2- According to your law, how can you justify the killing of innocent victims because of a claim of oppression?

3- What is your stand concerning a group that supports the killing of civilians, including women and children?

With our prayers, wishing you success and stability.

SECRET OPERATIONS

As al-Qaeda established itself in Afghanistan in the late 1990s and began managing international operations of ever increasing complexity and audacity, the group focused on ensuring the secrecy of its communications. It discouraged the use of e-mail and the telephone, and recommended faxes and couriers. The electronic files reflect the global nature of the work being done; much of the correspondence was neatly filed by country name. Messages were usually encrypted and often couched in language mimicking that of a multinational corporation; thus Osama bin Laden was sometimes "the contractor," acts of terrorism became "trade," Mullah Omar and the Taliban became "the Omar Brothers Company," the security services of the United States and Great Britain became "foreign competitors," and so on. Especially sensitive messages were encoded with a simple but reliable cryptographic system that had been used by both Allied and Axis powers during World War II—a "one-time pad" system that paired individual letters with randomly assigned numbers and letters and produced messages readable only by those who knew the pairings. The computer's files reveal that in 1998 and 1999, when a number of Islamists connected to al-Qaeda were arrested or compromised abroad, the *jihadis* in Afghanistan relied heavily on the one-time-pad system. They also devised new code names for people and places.

Letters sent from and to Ayman al-Zawahiri in 1999 contain coded language typical of many files on the computer; they also show the degree to which al-Qaeda operatives abroad were being exposed and detained because of their efforts. In the first of the following two letters much of the code remains mysterious.

TO: Yemen Cell Members
FROM: Ayman al-Zawahiri
FOLDER: Outgoing Mail—To Yemen
DATE: February 1, 1999

... I would like to clarify the following with relation to the birthday [probably an unspecified attack]:

- a) Don't think of showering as it may harm your health.
- b) We can't make a hotel reservation for you, but they usually don't mind making reservations for guests. Those who wish to make a reservation should go to Quwedat [a famous pastry shop in Cairo].
- c) I suggest that each of you takes a recipient to Quwedat to buy sweets, then make the hotel reservation. It is easy. After you check in, walk to Nur. After you attend the birthday go from Quwedat to Bushra St., where you should buy movie tickets to the Za'bolla movie theater.
- d) The birthday will be in the third month. How do you want to celebrate it in the seventh? Do you want us to change the boy's birth date? There are guests awaiting the real date to get back to their work.
- e) I don't have any gravel [probably ammunition or bomb-making material].

TO: Ayman al-Zawahiri
FROM: Unknown
FOLDER: Incoming Mail—From Yemen
DATE: May 13, 1999

Dear brother Salah al-Din:

... Forty of the contractor's [bin Laden's] friends here were taken by surprise by malaria [arrested] a few days ago, following the telegram they sent, which was similar to Salah al-Din's telegrams [that is, it used the same code]. The majority of them are from here [Yemen], and two are from the contractor's country [Saudi Arabia] ...

We heard that al-Asmar had a sudden illness and went to the hospital [prison]. He will have a session with the doctors [lawyers] early next month to see if he can be treated there, or if he should be sent for treatment in his country [probably Egypt, where *jihadis* were routinely tortured and hanged] ...

Osman called some days ago. He is fine but in intensive care [being monitored by the police]. When his situation improves he will call. He is considering looking for work with Salah al-Din [in Afghanistan], as opportunities are scarce where he is, but his health condition is the obstacle.

Though troubled by arrests abroad, the *jihadis* had time and safety for contemplation in Afghanistan. In 1999 al-Zawahiri undertook a top-secret program to develop chemi-

Tips for the Traveling Terrorist

*The al-Qaeda desktop computer contains voluminous "security" files devoted to, among other things, modern spycraft. The training offered is practical; students are told, for example, how to photograph a bombing target, use invisible ink, and evade police surveillance. The computer's manuals also focus on the broader history of partisan warfare and refer to an eclectic collection of role models, among them Aristotle, Jesus, Ahmed Kamel (the former head of Egyptian General Intelligence), and even the Israeli leader Menachem Begin, whose book *The Revolt* (1951), about his days as a terrorist fighting British rule in Palestine, is quoted approvingly at great length. The manuals devote special care to teaching recruits how to pass unnoticed in the West, and include the following advice:*

- Don't wear short pants that show socks when you're standing up. The pants should cover the socks, because intelligence authorities know that fundamentalists don't wear long pants ...
- If a person, for example, wears a T-shirt or a shirt that has the drawing of a spirit—that is, a bird, an animal, etc.—don't cut off the head [the Islamic tradition frowns on the depiction of living beings]. Either wear it with the drawing, or don't wear it at all. Moreover, you should never carry any item of clothing in your suitcase where the pictures have been tampered with, or where the head of the animal or bird has been cut off.
- Don't wear clothes made in suspect countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, North Korea, Cuba, etc.
- Underwear should be the normal type that people wear, not anything that shows you're a fundamentalist.
- A long time before traveling—especially from Khartoum—the person should always wear socks and shoes, to get rid of cracks [in the feet that come from extended bare-foot walking], which take about a week to cure ...
- If the mission requires wearing a chain, you should show it by opening the top buttons of the shirt ...
- Never use the perfumes used by the brothers [fundamentalists].
- You should differentiate between:
 - a) Perfume used only after shaving—"After Shave" is written on the bottle. This type is used only on the chin and nowhere else.
 - b) Perfumes—marked "Lotion"—that are placed anywhere on the clothes, on the head, behind the ears, etc.
- You should use the type of perfume for the underarms that usually comes in the shape of a soap ball. You should never use any other type of normal perfume under the arms.
- You should differentiate between men and women's perfume. If you use women's perfume, you are in trouble.

cal and biological weapons, a program he and others referred to on the computer as the "Yogurt" project. Though fearsome in its intent, the program had a proposed start-up budget of only \$2,000 to \$4,000. Fluent in English and French, al-Zawahiri began by studying foreign medical journals and provided summaries in Arabic for Muhammad Atef, including the one that follows.

TO: Muhammad Atef
FROM: Ayman al-Zawahiri
FOLDER: Outgoing Mail—
To Muhammad Atef
DATE: April 15, 1999

I have read the majority of the book [an unnamed volume, probably on biological and chemical weapons] ... [It] is undoubtedly useful. It emphasizes a number of important facts, such as:

a) The enemy started thinking about these weapons before WWI. Despite their extreme danger, we only became aware of them when the enemy drew our attention to them by repeatedly expressing concerns that they can be produced simply with easily available materials ...

b) The destructive power of these weapons is no less than that of nuclear weapons.

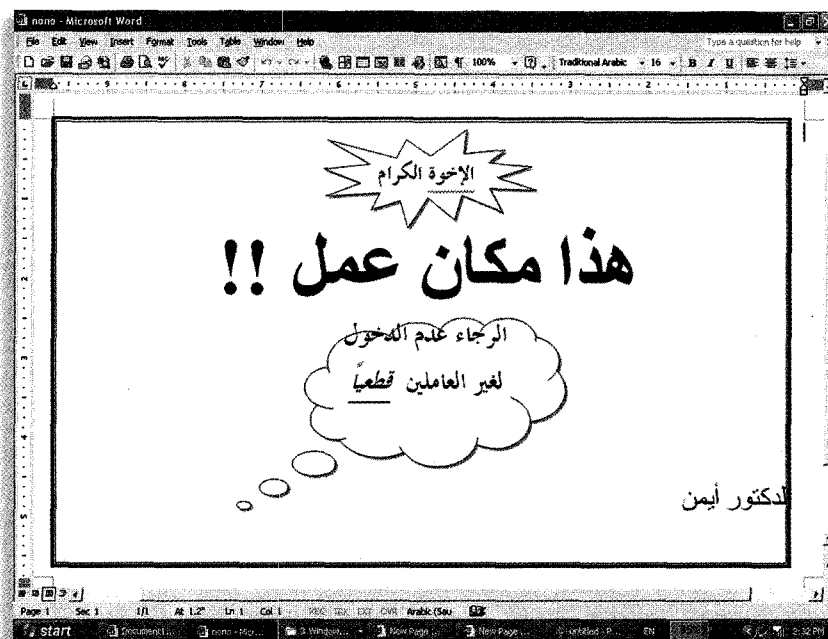
c) A germ attack is often detected days after it occurs, which raises the number of victims.

d) Defense against such weapons is very difficult, particularly if large quantities are used ...

I would like to emphasize what we previously discussed—that looking for a specialist is the fastest, safest, and cheapest way [to embark on a biological- and chemical-weapons program]. Simultaneously, we should conduct a search on our own ... Along these lines, the book guided me to a number of references that I am attaching. Perhaps you can find someone to obtain them ...

The letter goes on to cite mid-twentieth-century articles from, among other sources, *Science*, *The Journal of Immunology*, and *The New England Journal of Medicine*, and lists the names of such books as *Tomorrow's Weapons* (1964), *Peace or Pestilence* (1949), and *Chemical Warfare* (1921).

Al-Zawahiri and Atef appear to have settled on the development of a chemical weapon as the most feasible option available to them. Their exchanges on the computer show that they hired Medhat Mursi al-Sayed, an expert to whom they refer as Abu Khabab, to assist them. They also drew up rudimentary architectural plans for their laboratory and devised a scheme to create a charitable foundation to serve as a front for the operation. According to other sources, Abu Khabab gassed some stray dogs at a testing field in eastern Afghanistan, but there is no indication that al-Qaeda ever developed a chemical weapon it could deploy.



One of the last files saved on the desktop computer was a notice admonishing jihadis not to allow strangers to roam al-Qaeda's offices ("This is a place of work!"). It is signed by "Dr. Ayman"—most likely Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's top deputy

THE BANALITY OF OFFICE LIFE

Although al-Qaeda has been mythologized as a disciplined and sophisticated foe, united by a deadly commonality of purpose and by the wealth of its leader, internal correspondence on the computer reveals a somewhat different picture. In the years leading up to 9/11 the group was a loose confluence of organizations whose goals did not meld easily, as was seen in both tactical discussions (for example, should they attack Arab governments, America, or Israel?) and day-to-day office operations. At the most basic—that is to say, human—level the work relationships of al-Qaeda's key players were characterized by the same sort of bickering and gossiping and griping about money that one finds in offices everywhere. The following exchange is similar in tone and substance to much of what was found on the computer.

TO: Ezzat (real name unknown)
FROM: Ayman al-Zawahiri
FOLDER: Outgoing Mail—To Yemen
DATE: February 11, 1999

Noble brother Ezzat ...

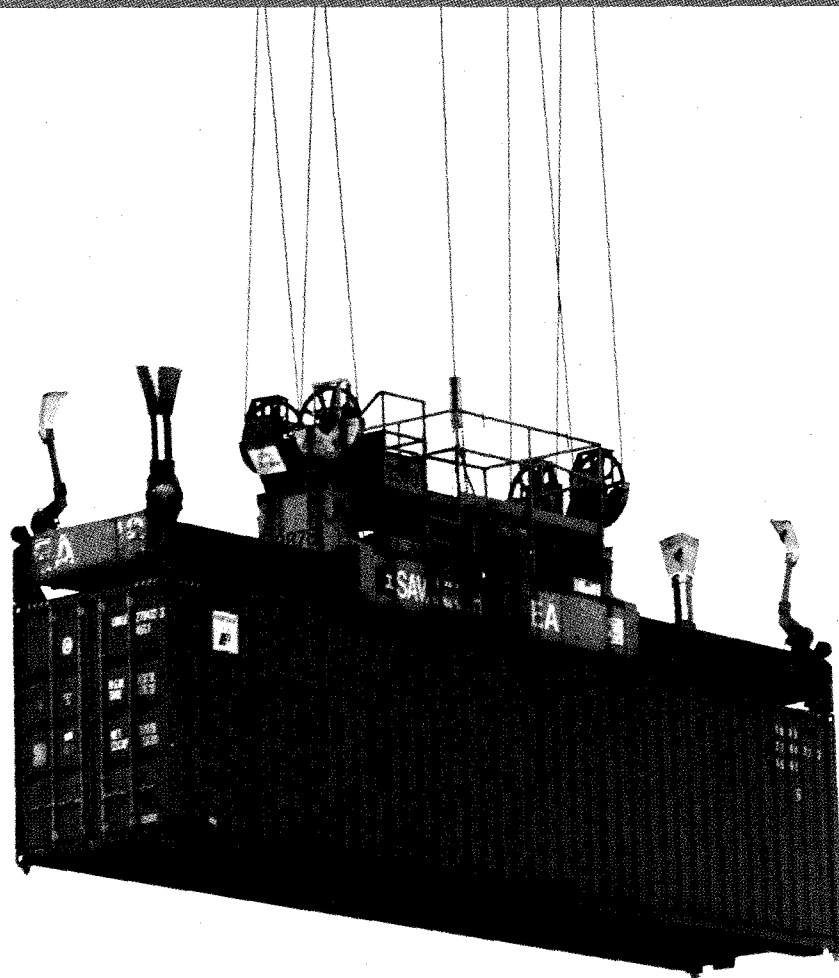
Following are my comments on the summary accounting I received:

... With all due respect, this is not an accounting. It's a summary accounting. For example, you didn't write any dates, and many of the items are vague.

The analysis of the summary shows the following:

1- You received a total of \$22,301. Of course, you didn't mention the period over which this sum was received. Our activities only benefited from a negligible portion of the

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money. This means that you received and distributed the money as you please ...

2- Salaries amounted to \$10,085—45 percent of the money. I had told you in my fax ... that we've been receiving only half salaries for five months. What is your reaction or response to this?

3- Loans amounted to \$2,190. Why did you give out loans? Didn't I give clear orders to Muhammad Saleh to ... refer any loan requests to me? We have already had long discussions on this topic ...

4- Why have guesthouse expenses amounted to \$1,573 when only Yunis is there, and he can be accommodated without the need for a guesthouse?

5- Why did you buy a new fax for \$470? Where are the two old faxes? Did you get permission before buying a new fax under such circumstances?

6- Please explain the cell-phone invoice amounting to \$756 (2,800 riyals) when you have mentioned communication expenses of \$300.

7- Why are you renovating the computer? Have I been informed of this?

8- General expenses you mentioned amounted to \$235. Can you explain what you mean? ...

TO: Ayman al-Zawahiri

FROM: Ezzat

FOLDER: Incoming Mail—From Yemen

DATE: February 17, 1999

Kind brother Nur al-Din [al-Zawahiri]:

... We don't have any guesthouses. We have bachelor houses, and the offices are there too. We called it a guesthouse hypothetically, and we don't have any bachelors except Basil and Youssef. And Abd al-Kareem lives at his work place.

If I buy a fax and we have two old ones, that would be wanton or mad.

Communication expenses were \$300 before we started using the mobile phone—and all these calls were to discuss the crises of Ashraf and Dawoud and Kareem and Ali and Ali Misarra and Abu Basel and others, in compliance with the orders.

Renovating our computer doesn't mean buying a new one but making sure that adjustments are made to suit Abdullah's [bin Laden's] work. There were many technical problems with the computer. These matters do not need approval.

There are articles for purchase that are difficult to keep track of, so we have put them under the title of general expenses ...

The first step for me to implement in taking your advice is to resign from ... any relationship whatsoever between me and your Emirate. Consider me a political refugee ...

THE MERGER

Al-Qaeda's relationship with the Taliban, though strained at times, grew cozier as the attacks on New York and Washington approached. Mullah Omar was enraged at the U.S. missile strikes on Khost, Afghanistan, in 1998—strikes that were made in retaliation for bin Laden's African-embassy bombings that year. Bin Laden, meanwhile, kept

after the Taliban leader with a campaign of flattery. He hailed Mullah Omar as Islam's new caliph (a lofty title not used since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire) and talked of Afghanistan as the kernel of what would become a sprawling and pure Islamic state that would embrace Central Asia and beyond. By 2001, some said, bin Laden had become a confidant of Mullah Omar, helping him to understand the outside world. He encouraged the Taliban leader to destroy the ancient Bamiyan Buddhas and sent him a congratulatory note afterward.

TO: Mullah Omar

FROM: Osama bin Laden

FOLDER: Publications

DATE: April 11, 2001

... I pray to God—after having granted you success in destroying the dead, deaf, and mute false gods—that He will grant you success in destroying the living false gods, the ones that talk and listen. God knows that those [gods] pose more danger to Islam and monotheism than the dead false gods. Among the most important such false gods in our time is the United Nations, which has become a new religion that is worshipped to the exclusion of God. The prophets of this religion are present in the UN General Assembly ... The UN imposes all sorts of penalties on all those who contradict its religion. It issues documents and statements that openly contradict Islamic belief, such as the International Declaration for Human Rights, considering all religions are equal, and considering that the destruction of the statues constitutes a crime ...

Meanwhile, Ayman al-Zawahiri rallied the support of other *jihadis*, especially in his militant group Islamic Jihad, which eventually became the largest component of al-Qaeda. Those *jihadis* from Egypt had been suspicious of him because of his close ties to bin Laden, whom they considered a publicity hound. In the summer of 1999 they ousted al-Zawahiri as the leader of Islamic Jihad and replaced him with a veteran, Tharwat Shehata, who wanted to limit the relationship with bin Laden and concentrate the group's fight against Egypt, not America. But with money scarce and morale low, Shehata soon resigned, and by the spring of 2001 al-Zawahiri had assumed control again. He sent a note to his colleagues in Islamic Jihad proposing a formal merger with bin Laden and al-Qaeda as "a way out of the bottleneck." Borrowing terms from global commerce, he warned of increased market share for "international monopolies"—the CIA and probably also Egyptian intelligence. The merger, he said, could "increase profits"—the publicity and support that terrorism could produce.

TO: Unknown

FROM: Ayman al-Zawahiri

FOLDER: Letters

DATE: May 3, 2001

The following is a summary of our situation: We are trying to return to our previous main activity [probably the

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Al-Qaeda's Web designers served jihadis across the Islamic world. This page contains links to short obituaries—accessible by clicking on the faces—of martyrs who died in Afghanistan, Tripoli, Benghazi, and Casablanca, among other places

Letters From a Young Martyr

By the late 1990s suicide operations had become a core element of al-Qaeda's strategy. Not long after 9/11 a functionary in al-Qaeda's Kabul office named Azmiray al-Maarek was chosen for a suicide operation. He drafted several farewell letters, including one to bin Laden and one to his own wife. He also composed a series of poems for bin Laden. His fate is unknown.

TO: Osama bin Laden
FROM: Azmiray al-Maarek
FOLDER: Deleted File (Recovered)
DATE: November 4, 2001

Sheikh Osama,

God protect you, and grant you highest rewards for me and for the Islamic nation. I would have liked to pray in Jerusalem but I may precede you in going where the permanent heaven is. Please be pious and firm. Here is a group of my poems. I wrote the poem "Going to God" after you gave me the good news [about being selected for a suicide operation]. Please read all these poems, particularly the last one, in public. I hope you will fulfill this wish after I die in the battle against the enemies of religion. Be hopeful. This religion will certainly be victorious. You are one of the symbols through the hands of whom God will grant us victory. You are the guardian of the Muslim nation. Nobody in our time has cared more about it. I have left my will with the brothers in Kandahar. My numbers are in the will, so please give my mother the good news. Please ask all the brothers to forgive me after my death.

God reward you for me. If I am a martyr I will ask God's forgiveness for you. I hope for God's mercy. An hour of patience is the key to heaven.

I hope that God joins us in heaven.

Your son,

Azmiray al-Maarek

"GOING TO GOD"

I am going to God, mother
 I am going to live in His mercy
 My feet will lead (guide) me
 God willing, to His orders and right path.
 Don't be sad, sing and ululate.
 God has chosen me
 As a man, for I have lived every day
 As a man that bought his religion and sold
 his whims.
 Mother of my son, be hopeful and patient.
 We will meet in heaven.
 I will die for my nation to live.
 I will be alive in heaven.

Just one push on the trigger and I'm over,

Thus disfiguring the face of the enemies.
 May the faces of those who don't fear God be disfigured,
 The faces of those who don't defend Him.
 May the cowards never sleep.
 It is shameful what is happening in Jerusalem.
 Get up, coward, as a man,
 And perform glorious acts. Don't fear.
 Father, forgive my sins,
 And feel proud of the son you'll meet in heaven.
 For the principle we lived for
 I will die so that you may live by it, father.

TO: His wife [unnamed]
FROM: Azmiray al-Maarek
FOLDER: Deleted File (Recovered)
DATE: November 6, 2001

Mother of Ibrahim,

By the time you receive this will, I will be in the craws of birds, God willing, after having performed a martyrdom operation against the country of infidelity. This operation, God willing, will turn the tide for Islam and Muslims. My darling, and mother of my son, be pious and patient. I have preceded you to a place the inhabitants of which don't suffer. Follow me there through obedience to God ... Know that my death is martyrdom, my imprisonment hermitage, my exile tourism in God's land. I would like to meet you in heaven, so please help me by waking up at night to pray, fasting during the day, and staying away from temptation. God is my witness that I am satisfied with you. Any woman who dies after having obtained her husband's satisfaction is worthy of heaven. I ask God to grant you heaven. God is my witness that all your deeds were good. You were the best wife, friend, and companion. God bless you. Prayers be upon the Prophet Muhammad, all his family, and his companions.

Your husband,

Father of Ibrahim,

Azmiray al-Maarek

merger]. The most important step was starting the school [training camps], the programs of which have been started. We also provided the teachers with means of conducting profitable trade as much as we could. Matters are all promising, except for the unfriendliness of two teachers, despite what we have provided for them. We are patient.

As you know, the situation below in the village [probably Egypt] has become bad for traders [*jihadis*]. Our Upper Egyptian relatives have left the market, and we are suffering from international monopolies. Conflicts take place between us for trivial reasons, due to the scarcity of resources. We are also dispersed over various cities. However, God had mercy on us when the Omar Brothers Company [the Taliban] here opened the market for traders and provided them with an opportunity to reorganize, may God reward them. Among the benefits of residence here is that traders from all over gather in one place under one company, which increases familiarity and cooperation among them, particularly between us and the Abdullah Contracting Company [bin Laden and his associates]. The latest result of this cooperation is ... the offer they gave. Following is a summary of the offer:

Encourage commercial activities [*jihad*] in the village to face foreign investors; stimulate publicity; then agree on joint work to unify trade in our area. Close relations allowed for an open dialogue to solve our problems. Colleagues here believe that this is an excellent opportunity to encourage sales in general, and in the village in particular. They are keen on the success of the project. They are also hopeful that this may be a way out of the bottleneck to transfer our activities to the stage of multinationals and joint profit. We are negotiating the details with both sides ...

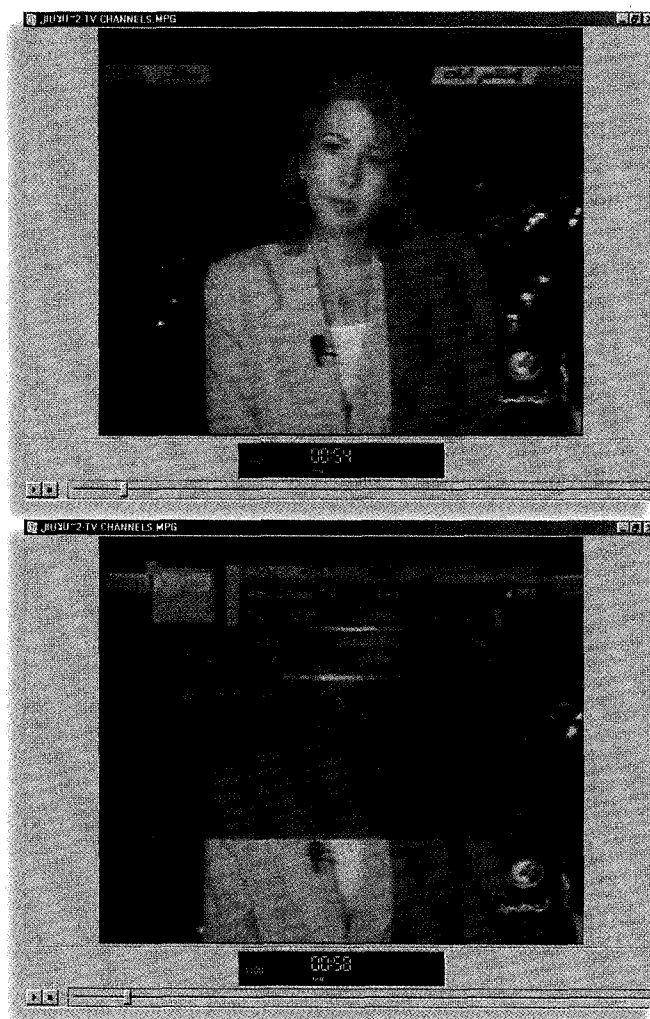
Al-Zawahiri's proposal set off a storm of protest from some members of Islamic Jihad, who—again—favored focusing on the struggle against the Egyptian government. They accused al-Zawahiri of leading their group in dangerous directions.

TO: Ayman al-Zawahiri
FROM: Unknown
FOLDER: Letters
DATE: Summer, 2001

Dear brother Abdullah al-Dayem:
 [another name for al-Zawahiri]

... I disagree completely with the issue of sales and profits. These are not profits. They are rather a farce of compound losses. I believe that going on in this is a dead end, as if we were fighting ghosts or windmills. Enough of pouring musk on barren land.

I don't believe that we need to give indications of how this unplanned path will fail. All we need to do is to estimate the company's assets since the beginning of this last phase, then take inventory of what remains. Count the number of laborers in your farms [probably cells] at the mother's area [probably Egypt], then see if anyone has stayed. Consider any of the many projects where you enthusiastically participated. Did any of them succeed, other than the Badr external greenhouses, which enjoyed limited success?



Al-Qaeda downloaded and saved Arab-language satellite news-casts in order to keep abreast of events after 9/11. The appearance of female newscasters was a continual annoyance; jihadi technicians covered the women's faces with dialog boxes

All indicators point out that the place and time are not suitable for this type of agriculture. Cotton may not be planted in Siberia, just as apples cannot be planted in hot areas. I'm sure you are aware that wheat is planted in winter and cotton in summer. After all our efforts we haven't seen any crops in winter or summer.

This type of agriculture is ridiculous. It's as if we were throwing good seeds onto barren land.

In previous experiments where the circumstances and seeds were better we made major losses. Now everything has deteriorated. Ask those with experience in agriculture and history.

Despite the protests of certain Islamic Jihad members, a merger with al-Qaeda had been cemented in the spring of 2001, and in June the new group issued "Statement No. 1"—a press release of sorts, found on the computer, that warned the "Zionist and Christian coalition" that "they will soon roast in the same flame they now play with." The following month someone sat down at the computer and composed

a short message, titled "The Solution," which trumpeted "martyrdom operations" as the key to the battle against the West. On August 23 another operative tapped out a report on a target-spotting mission in Egypt and Israel that had been carried out by Richard Reid—the British national who would later try to blow up a Paris-to-Miami airline flight with a bomb packed in one of his high-top sneakers. And on that same day in August the following plan for sending an agent on a target-spotting mission to the U.S.-Canadian border region was typed into the computer.

TO: Real name unknown
FROM: Unknown
FOLDER: Hamza
DATE: August 23, 2001

Special file for our brother Abu Bakr al-Albani ["the Albanian"] on the nature of his mission.

First, the mission: Gather information on:

1. Information on American soldiers who frequent nightclubs in the America-Canada border areas
2. The Israeli embassy, consulate, and cultural center in Canada
3. If it is possible to enter America and gather information on American soldier checkpoints, or on the American army in the border areas inside America
4. Information on the possibility of obtaining explosive devices inside Canada ...

I have given to our brother \$1,500 for travel expenses in Canada and America, and also the cost of the ticket for the trip back to us after four months, God willing.

AFTER 9/11

The first evidence of work on the computer following 9/11 comes just days after the attacks, in the form of a promotional video called "The Big Job"—a montage of television footage of the attacks and their chaotic aftermath, all set to rousing victory music. The office was surely busier than it had ever been before, and soon many members of al-Qaeda's inner circle were competing for time on the computer. Ramzi bin al-Shibh, the senior Yemeni operative who coordinated with Khalid Sheikh Muhammad in masterminding the attacks, used the computer to work on a hasty and unfinished ideological justification for the operation, which he titled "The Truth About the New Crusade: A Ruling on the Killing of Women and Children of the Non-Believers," excerpts of which follow:

Concerning the operations of the blessed Tuesday [9/11] ... they are legally legitimate, because they are committed against a country at war with us, and the people in that country are combatants. Someone might say that it is the innocent, the elderly, the women, and the children who are victims, so how can these operations be legitimate according to *sharia*? And we say that the sanctity of women, children, and the elderly is not absolute. There are special cases ... Muslims may respond in kind if infidels have targeted women and children and elderly Muslims, [or if] they are being invaded, [or if] the non-combatants



The cover of an ideological defense of 9/11: "The Truth About the New Crusade," by Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a Yemeni member of al-Qaeda who helped plan the attacks

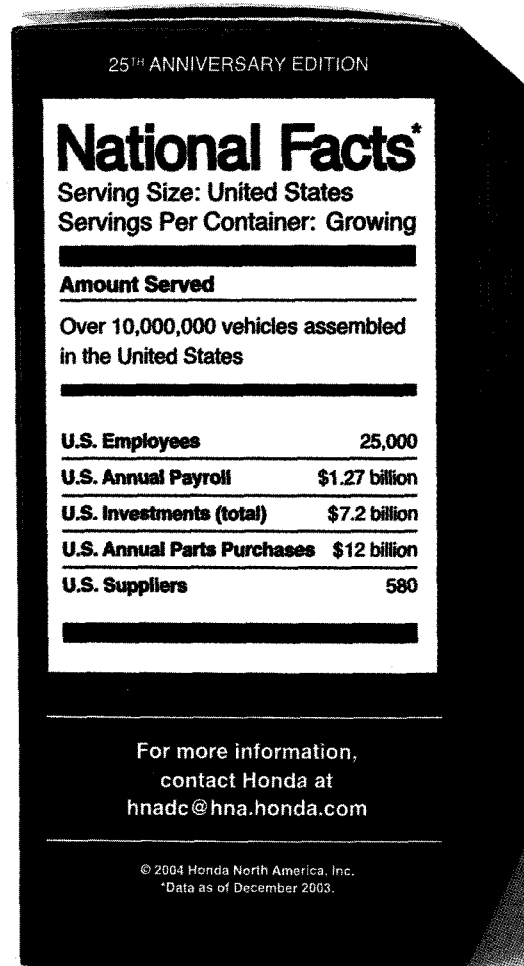
are helping with the fight, whether in action, word, or any other type of assistance, [or if they] need to attack with heavy weapons, which do not differentiate between combatants and non-combatants ...

Now that we know that the operations were permissible from the Islamic point of view, we must answer or respond to those who prohibit the operations from the point of view of benefits or harms ...

There are benefits ... The operations have brought about the largest economic crisis that America has ever known. Material losses amount to one trillion dollars. America has lost about two thousand economic brains as a result of the operations. The stock exchange dropped drastically, and American consumer spending deteriorated. The dollar has dropped, the airlines have been crippled, the American globalization system, which was going to spoil the world, is gone ...

Because of Saddam and the Baath Party, America punished a whole population. Thus its bombs and its embargo killed millions of Iraqi Muslims. And because of Osama bin Laden, America surrounded Afghans and bombed them, causing the death of tens of thousands of Muslims ... God said to assault whoever assaults you, in a like manner ... In killing Americans who are ordinarily off limits, Muslims should not exceed four million non-combatants, or render more than ten million of them homeless. We should avoid this, to make sure the penalty [that we are inflicting] is no more than reciprocal. God knows what is best.

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Osama bin Laden himself was composing letters on the computer just weeks before the fall of Kabul. In them he defiantly addressed the American people with a statement of al-Qaeda's goals, which he then went on to spell out at much greater length for Mullah Omar, in the spirit of a powerful, high-level political adviser offering advice to a head of state.

TO: The American People
FROM: Osama bin Laden
FOLDER: Publications
DATE: October 3, 2001

What takes place in America today was caused by the flagrant interference on the part of successive American governments into others' business. These governments imposed regimes that contradict the faith, values, and lifestyles of the people. This is the truth that the American government is trying to conceal from the American people.

Our current battle is against the Jews. Our faith tells us we shall defeat them, God willing. However, Muslims find that the Americans stand as a protective shield and strong supporter, both financially and morally. The desert storm that blew over New York and Washington should, in our view, have blown over Tel Aviv. The American position obliged Muslims to force the Americans out of the arena first to enable them to focus on their Jewish enemy. Why are the Americans fighting a battle on behalf of the Jews? Why do they sacrifice their sons and interests for them?

TO: Mullah Omar
FROM: Osama bin Laden
FOLDER: Deleted File (Recovered)
DATE: October 3, 2001

Highly esteemed Leader of the Faithful,
Mullah Muhammad Omar, Mujahid,
May God preserve him ...

1- We treasure your message, which confirms your generous, heroic position in defending Islam and in standing up to the symbols of infidelity of this time.

2- I would like to emphasize the major impact of your statements on the Islamic world. Nothing harms America more than receiving your strong response to its positions and statements. Thus it is very important that the Emirate respond to every threat or demand from America ... with demands that America put an end to its support of Israel, and that U.S. forces withdraw from Saudi Arabia. Such responses nullify the effect of the American media on people's morale.

Newspapers mentioned that a recent survey showed that seven out of every ten Americans suffer psychological problems following the attacks on New York and Washington.

Although you have already made strong declarations, we ask you to increase them to equal the opponent's media campaign in quantity and force.

Their threat to invade Afghanistan should be countered by a threat on your part that America will not be able to dream of security until Muslims experience it as reality in Palestine and Afghanistan.

3- Keep in mind that America is currently facing two contradictory problems:

a) If it refrains from responding to *jihad* operations, its prestige will collapse, thus forcing it to withdraw its troops abroad and restrict itself to U.S. internal affairs. This will transform it from a major power to a third-rate power, similar to Russia.

b) On the other hand, a campaign against Afghanistan will impose great long-term economic burdens, leading to further economic collapse, which will force America, God willing, to resort to the former Soviet Union's only option: withdrawal from Afghanistan, disintegration, and contraction.

Thus our plan in the face of this campaign should focus on the following:

—Serving a blow to the American economy, which will lead to:

a) Further weakening of the American economy

b) Shaking the confidence in the American economy. This will lead investors to refrain from investing in America or participating in American companies, thus accelerating the fall of the American economy ...

—Conduct a media campaign to fight the enemy's publicity. The campaign should focus on the following important points:

a) Attempt to cause a rift between the American people and their government, by demonstrating the following to the Americans:

—That the U.S. government will lead them into further losses of money and lives.

—That the government is sacrificing the people to serve the interests of the rich, particularly the Jews.

—That the government is leading them to the war front to protect Israel and its security.

—America should withdraw from the current battle between Muslims and Jews.

This plan aims to create pressure from the American people on their government to stop its campaign against Afghanistan, on the grounds that the campaign will cause major losses to the American people.

—Imply that the campaign against Afghanistan will be responded to with revenge blows against America.

I believe that we can issue, with your permission, a number of speeches that we expect will have the greatest impact, God willing, on the American, Pakistani, Arab, and Muslim people.

Finally, I would like to emphasize how much we appreciate the fact that you are our Emir. I would like to express our great appreciation of your historical stands in the service of Islam and in the defense of the Prophet's tradition. We ask God to accept and reward such stands.

We ask God to grant the Muslim Afghani nation, under your leadership, victory over the American infidels, just as He singled this nation out with the honor of defeating the Communist infidels.

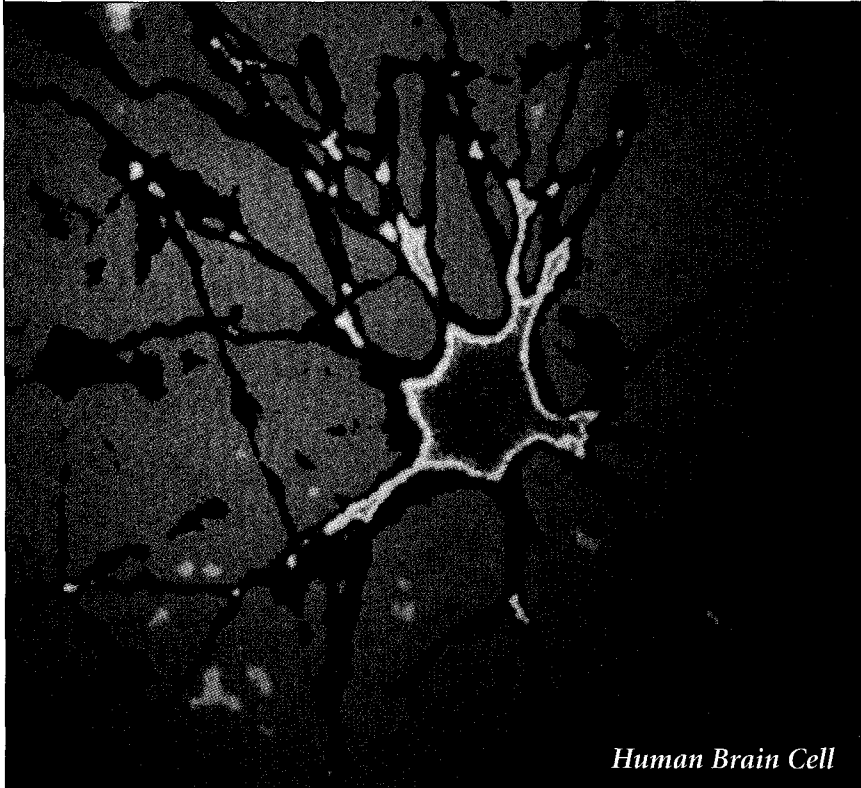
We ask God to lead you to the good of both this life and the afterlife.

Peace upon you and God's mercy and blessings.

Your brother,

Osama Bin Muhammad Bin Laden ■

HEALTHY CELLS



Human Brain Cell

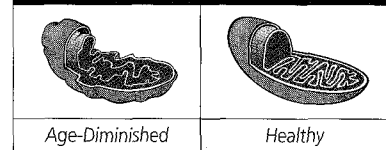
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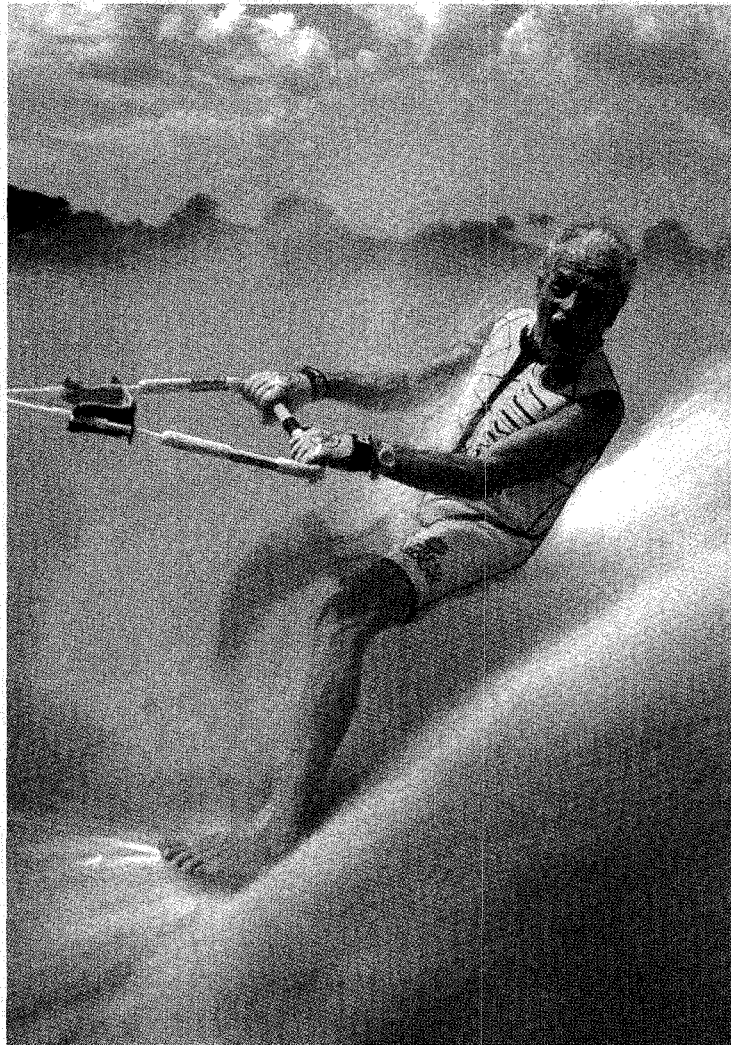
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THE HOLLYWOOD CAMPAIGN

*Want big money to get elected to national office?
If you're a Democrat, you need to head for the hills—Beverly Hills.
A miner's map for the liberal Gold Rush*

BY ERIC ALTERMAN

Illustration by Steve Brodner

.....

It's like an Academy Awards ceremony for liberals outside the Wadsworth Theater, in Brentwood, California, on a sultry night in early May, as celebrity-show television interviewers and perhaps a hundred paparazzi jostle one another and scream out the names of stars to get a smile or a sound bite. The occasion is a benefit for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental-activist organization that has become the hottest cause in Hollywood other than sending George Bush back to Crawford. And here they come, one by one: Tom Hanks, Leonardo DiCaprio, Martin Short, Rob Reiner, Larry David, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., all stopping to talk to the men and women with microphones about the need to protect and defend the planet from corporate polluters and their allies. Slipping through the crowd more quietly are Michelle Pfeiffer, Tobey Maguire, and Ray Romano. Also skipping the "green carpet" and sneaking in late, wearing faded blue jeans and a black Taj Mahal T-shirt, is the playboy-producer-philanthropist Steve Bing, the largest noncorporate giver of the night. Overseeing the event is Larry David's wife, Laurie, a former TV producer and manager turned full-time environmental activist, who has been working for months to make this the biggest NRDC fundraiser ever.

Along with the stars in the 1,400-seat hall are many of the same fundraising giants who have helped establish Hollywood as the first stop for any liberal politician or do-gooder organization. The audience boasts three studio heads, including Alan Horn, of Warner Brothers. In the late 1990s, together with the director Rob Reiner, Horn helped the NRDC get off the ground in Hollywood by spending three full days taking its founder and president, John Adams, to see the heads of all the studios and persuade them to support it. They agreed, eventually, and tonight the NRDC will get \$100,000 each from HBO and Village Roadshow Productions, \$50,000 from MTV Networks, and \$25,000 each from Fox Group and the William Morris Agency. The environmental group has come a long way

since 2000, when Cameron Diaz could joke, "When asked if I was into the NRDC, I said, 'I don't know—how does one of their songs go?'"

The program is a mixture of high-minded politics and lowbrow comedy, with earnest but entertaining music in between. Afterward Laurie David, dancing on the sidelines in a slinky green Versace dress, throws up her hands as if her team had just scored the winning touchdown. The NRDC will be \$3 million richer.

There really is gold in them thar hills. During the 2000 election cycle, zip-code areas on average yielded slightly more than \$35,000 in political contributions, while residents of Beverly Hills, 90210, ponied up slightly more than \$6.2 million. In the same year Pacific Palisades, Bel Air, and Brentwood were each good for \$1.7 million to \$3.3 million. In 2002 entertainment ranked first among all industries funding Democratic Party committees, and roughly 80 percent of the industry's party contributions went to Democratic candidates and committees; just 20 percent went to the Republican Party. From 1989 up to the start of the current election cycle Hollywood had given the party nearly \$100 million for federal elections alone—close to the \$114 million Republicans received from their friends in the oil and gas industries. Together with organized labor and the trial bar, Hollywood is now one of the three pillars of the Democrats' financial structure. Say what you will about the rigors of fundraising, it's got to be a lot more fun to hang poolside at Pacific Palisades with Sharon Stone and Cameron Diaz than at the annual AFL-CIO retreat in Bal Harbour with John Sweeney and Richard Trumka.

In the crucial currency called celebrity, the Republicans can barely scrape together two bits. True, Arnold Schwarzenegger is a Republican, and a member in good standing of the Hollywood community. And the Republicans Mel Gibson, Charlton Heston, Tom Selleck, Bruce Willis, Shannen Doherty, Chuck Norris, and Kelsey Grammer live in Hol-

Eric Alterman is a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. His newest book is When Presidents Lie: A History of Deception and Its Consequences (2004).

lywood. But even with the outsize presence of Schwarzenegger, what the Republicans offer isn't much. Within the industry the left-leaning is so pervasive that the former sex kitten Bo Derek, named to the board of the Kennedy Center by George W. Bush, complains that she is treated as "some hateful monster" by Hollywood liberals, and says, "I'm told I'll never work again."

Raising money in Hollywood is far more complicated than it used to be, now that campaign-finance reform has disallowed unlimited soft-money contributions. (Soft money goes to party committees and organizations; hard money goes directly to candidates.) There is no central headquarters anymore. Thirty years ago the only man you'd need to see while running for office would be Lew Wasserman, the unchallenged titan of MCA and the last "king of Hollywood," as Connie Bruck's recent biography crowned him. Wasserman, whose close friendship with President Lyndon Johnson transcended politics and commerce and whose personal power in the industry remains an unapproachable goal for any mogul today, would have a few calls made, and you'd leave with whatever he thought was appropriate. There was no sense in anyone's risking Wasserman's ire to hold on to a measly few thousand bucks—or even a few tens of thousands. Lloyd Hand, a Texas lawyer who helped with Johnson's 1964 presidential campaign, recalled in Bruck's book, "An invitation to Lew's house was like an invitation to the president's house—a command performance." Stragglers would get a call from Wasserman's social-affairs assistant, Ann O'Connor, asking, "Are you taking a table? May I report to Mr. Wasserman that you will be doing so?"

Wasserman, who died in 2002, was also a talent spotter. The producer Sean Daniel, who worked for him, tells a story of the day in the late 1980s when Wasserman summoned him to meet a young Arkansas governor about whom, Daniel says, "Lew had heard good reviews" and who was "going somewhere." Speaking at Wasserman's memorial service, Bill Clinton later said he had been amazed that Wasserman would want to "spend forty-five minutes talking to a politician from a state that for all I knew, he'd never even visited." Indeed, Clinton recalled that when he asked Wasserman what he might do to make Arkansas more attractive as a movie location, Wasserman, "in very elegant and brief language," said, "Not much." Nevertheless, Wasserman took a liking to the young governor, and said to Daniel, "Let's see if there's a picture we can shoot down there." That was the only signal necessary. *Biloxi Blues*, starring Matthew Broderick and directed by Mike Nichols, was shot in Arkansas in 1987.

By the mid-1970s a range of alternatives to the Wasserman-centered power structure had begun to appear. There had been an explosion of young wealth in Hollywood, and a sense that the establishment, tied to the Johnson-Humphrey wing of the Democratic Party, no longer represented the industry's voice. The center of gravity shifted toward the "Malibu Mafia," which during the seventies was led by



Norman Lear and the Hollywood activist and fundraiser Stanley Sheinbaum, and, later, toward a group of young actors and donors called "Network," which was centered on Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda, and operated from the couple's Santa Monica home.

Beginning in 1984 something like one-stop shopping was available at the Hollywood Women's Political Committee (HWPC). Sure, the members might subject candidates to some tough questioning. These hard-nosed women, led by Fonda, Barbra Streisand, the songwriter and current president of ASCAP Marilyn Bergman, the producer Paula Weinstein, and others, took their roles seriously. The vetting was guided by Marge Tabankin, the pro who ran the committee. But if the HWPC approved a candidate, there was serious money to be had. In 1996 the HWPC raised more than \$4 million in a single night for Bill Clinton's re-election. Just a year later, though, the committee shut down. Its members no longer wished to contribute to the "money merry-go-round" they believed had become one of the central problems of American politics.

It was a worthy, if quaint, sentiment; but money didn't stop being necessary. Today money and influence in Hollywood are more diffuse. One option for political supplicants, of course, is to find people with so much money that they barely even notice when they give some of it away. Ask about Hollywood donors capable of giving millions (not



just a million here or there but millions and millions over a sustained period of time, to more than one candidate or cause), and the same names come up again and again. There is the investment banker Ron Burkle, a former supermarket czar who, individually and through his company, gave more than \$1.5 million in soft money during the 2000 and 2002 election cycles, before gifts of that size were outlawed by McCain-Feingold. (Under that law hard-money political contributions are limited to \$2,000 for a single candidate, once during primary season and once during the actual campaign, with a two-year cap of \$95,000 per donor on hard and soft money for all candidates and committees.) There is Haim Saban, an Egyptian-born, Israeli-reared entrepreneur who made a fortune on the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. Saban put up more than \$7 million to pay for the construction of a new Democratic Party headquarters in Washington, D.C., just in time to beat the restrictions on soft-money giving. In all he donated \$10 million of soft money to the Democratic Party during the 2002 election cycle.

And then there is the dashing Steve Bing, who manages to maintain his boyish, almost adolescent good looks despite a few lines on his face and a head of closely cropped gray hair. A film producer and real-estate heir, he has been nicknamed "Bing Laden" and called a "spermicidal maniac" by London tabloids, owing to his various romantic entanglements. (When the actress Elizabeth Hurley announced that

she was pregnant with Bing's child, he issued a news release claiming that she had chosen "to be a single mother" and stating that their relationship was a non-exclusive one. He began proceedings to force a DNA test, which resulted in his accepting responsibility for the child. Bing also sued the billionaire corporate raider Kirk Kerkorian for invasion of privacy after Kerkorian had an employee grab some dental floss out of Bing's garbage in an attempt to prove that Bing was the father of his ex-wife's daughter.) The eyebrow-raising details of his private life notwithstanding, Bing is particularly popular in Hollywood because he is uninterested in receiving credit for his generosity. One fundraiser says, "My dream is to be able to say, 'Oh, just shut up and write the goddamn check, will you?'" This is what Steve Bing does. And what checks they turn out to be! Rob Reiner says that when the NRDC needed \$1.7 million to finish building its Santa Monica headquarters, he made a single call to Steve Bing, asking him to meet with John Adams. Bing agreed, and soon after the money was there. (Bing would not talk about this, or anything else about himself, when asked.)

The Center for Responsive Politics calculates Bing's (pre-McCain-Feingold) 2002-cycle donations to the Democrats at \$8.7 million. Recently George Soros came to Hollywood to raise money in a series of private billionaire-to-billionaire meetings for America Coming Together and The Media Fund, the coordinated anti-Bush organizations created to

fit within the strictures of campaign-finance laws, to which he has promised \$10 million. A kind of shadow Democratic Party, ACT and The Media Fund (under the joint fundraising umbrella of Victory Campaign 2004) are 527 organizations: they independently raise and spend money to identify voters and buy air time for advertising. These and other 527 organizations, on the left and the right, have come in for a lot of heat, because contributions are unlimited so long as the organization does not communicate with any candidate or official party committee—and everyone suspects that the concept “does not communicate” has been vitiated by Talmudic parsing. I’m told that after seeing Soros, Bing upped his contribution from \$2 million to nearly \$7 million, just like that. No wonder the constant refrain from the politically connected in Hollywood is “What we need more than anything is more Steve Bings.”

Or Barbra Streisands. Famously, Barbra Streisand does not shut up and do anything. She is constantly giving speeches, faxing memos, and updating her political views on Barbrastreisand.com. Loathed on the right, Streisand is sometimes ribbed even by writers on the left. (After hearing her speak at the Kennedy School at Harvard, Frank Rich joked, “It’s not enough for Ms. Streisand just to make her movies better anymore—there’s a whole country out there.”) But the money she raised through her benefit concerts made her for years perhaps the single biggest individual funder of liberal causes in America—at least until George Soros got into the act. In 2000, on the night Al Gore was nominated, she headlined a benefit for the Democratic National Committee in Los Angeles’s Shrine Auditorium, which

Before this year’s election cycle even began, Hollywood had given the Democratic Party contributions roughly equivalent to what Republicans received from their friends in the oil and gas industries.

grossed \$5.2 million. A single performance for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in 2002 raised about \$6 million. A June concert at which she sang lyrics to “People” revised by Alan and Marilyn Bergman (calling Donald Rumsfeld “the spookiest person in the world” and saying she was “scared out of my Wolfowitz”) raised \$5 million for the DNC and John Kerry. Streisand remains the object of considerable affection in Hollywood. The fact is, most people there agree with what she says, and she puts her money where her mouth is.

The dirty little secret of Hollywood is that with few exceptions, stars don’t pay. They show up, look pretty, and

on occasion even demand a check themselves. This goes unchallenged and usually unmentioned by most of Hollywood, because nobody has any interest in calling attention to it. The stars don’t want the public to know that they stiff the candidates and causes with which they are associated. The fundraisers for these candidates and causes have no desire to alienate the very people they spend so much time begging for a drop-by. Agents and managers who arrange the appearances are accustomed to getting all kinds of goodies in exchange for a sprinkling of their clients’ fabulousness.

The only celebrity donors who come close to Streisand’s level of financial commitment are Robert Redford and Paul Newman, and neither one of them seems to want much to do with Hollywood. Meanwhile, Streisand—acting on the advice of people such as her longtime friend Marilyn Bergman, a member of Streisand’s foundation board, and her friend and adviser Marge Tabankin—every year sends out scores of checks that together total anywhere from \$600,000 to \$1 million, to such advocacy organizations as the Center for Public Integrity, which documents corporate and political malfeasance, and Homies Unidos, a group in Los Angeles that tries to keep kids out of gangs. If you want to get inside Streisand’s political pocketbook, you have to go through Tabankin, who receives on the order of a thousand requests a year.

Scenes like the NRDC fundraiser arouse no end of hostility and mockery within the media, and especially among conservatives. After a recent celebrity-filled preview of Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Bill O’Reilly said the access of Bush-fighting Hollywood activists to the “profitable and pervasive” “celebrity media” was a “Leni Riefenstahl Third Reich propaganda proposition, where what they say and do is put in everybody’s face.” When in 2002 it was revealed that Al Gore had consulted with Rob Reiner before giving a speech on Iraq, the columnist Charles Krauthammer observed that while Bush was relying on the likes of Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Donald Rumsfeld, Gore was “huddling with Meathead”—a reference to Reiner’s role as Archie Bunker’s son-in-law on *All in the Family*. *The New Republic*’s literary editor, Leon Wieseltier, has complained of “insulated and bubble-headed ... Hollywood actors [who] are even more out of touch than elected politicians.” Hollywood’s high profile makes any dumb remarks very, very public. Consider the pop star Jessica Simpson’s recent comment to Gale Norton, who had been introduced to her as the Secretary of the Interior: “You’ve done a nice job decorating the White House.”

Yes, Hollywood’s wealth notwithstanding, its activists are by and large liberal. Like an Ivy League humanities department or a folksingers’ convention, Hollywood attracts that kind of people. They give their dollars to protect the environment, to secure a woman’s right to abortion, to promote the



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rights of gay people to marry, to help prevent the spread of AIDS in Africa, to oppose virtually every aspect of President Bush's foreign policy. By mainstream American political standards, the groups that compete with one another to be *the* group in Hollywood—the NRDC, the ACLU, People for the American Way, Artists for a New South Africa—are all quite liberal. In Hollywood circles, though, supporting such groups is no more controversial than heading up a campaign for a cancer clinic in Nashville or for the Museum of Modern Art in New York. And exactly why so many people in the media find it less objectionable, say, for the CEO of General Motors to lobby for relaxed auto-emission standards than for an actor or a director to contribute to a campaign for clean air is not immediately apparent. Indeed, among the tiny percentage of Americans who do contribute large amounts of money to political campaigns (the number who give a thousand dollars or more to any candidate hovers around one tenth of one percent of the population), Hollywood contributors are almost alone in not trying to buy themselves anything so concrete as a tax break or a watered-down regulation. Although the entertainment industry itself does have corporate PACs, which do the industry's bidding and spread its wealth accordingly, most of the contributions handed out by individual members of the entertainment industry are ideological money that buys them nothing.

Former senator Gary Hart—who made the Hollywood rounds numerous times as a candidate, topping off his campaign accounts before heading back to the hustings—says that right-wing attacks on the “Hollywood connection” have little impact. Although Hollywood was once viewed as the sin capital of America, Hart says, Ronald Reagan's presidency neutralized that notion: “After all, he came out of that industry, so how could his admirers continue to demonize it?” Hart recalls that when he ran for the Senate as a “rookie,” in 1974, Warren Beatty and Jack Nicholson came to conservative Colorado to campaign for him, and no one made it an issue. He says, “The only danger [is] if you give the appearance of having been captured by Hollywood, and you have become starstruck. Otherwise, I think we're beyond that.”

The famously misanthropic comedian Larry David says that the biggest surprise he's had since growing into a “rich prick” (following a lifetime as a “poor schmuck”) is his discovery of altruism in the people who contribute to the causes of his wife, Laurie. He is, he claims, “amazed at how generous these people are.” “In business,” he says, “they've earned the reputation of being selfish and ruthless. You would expect artists to give. But all the executives—you wouldn't expect them to be generous, would you?”

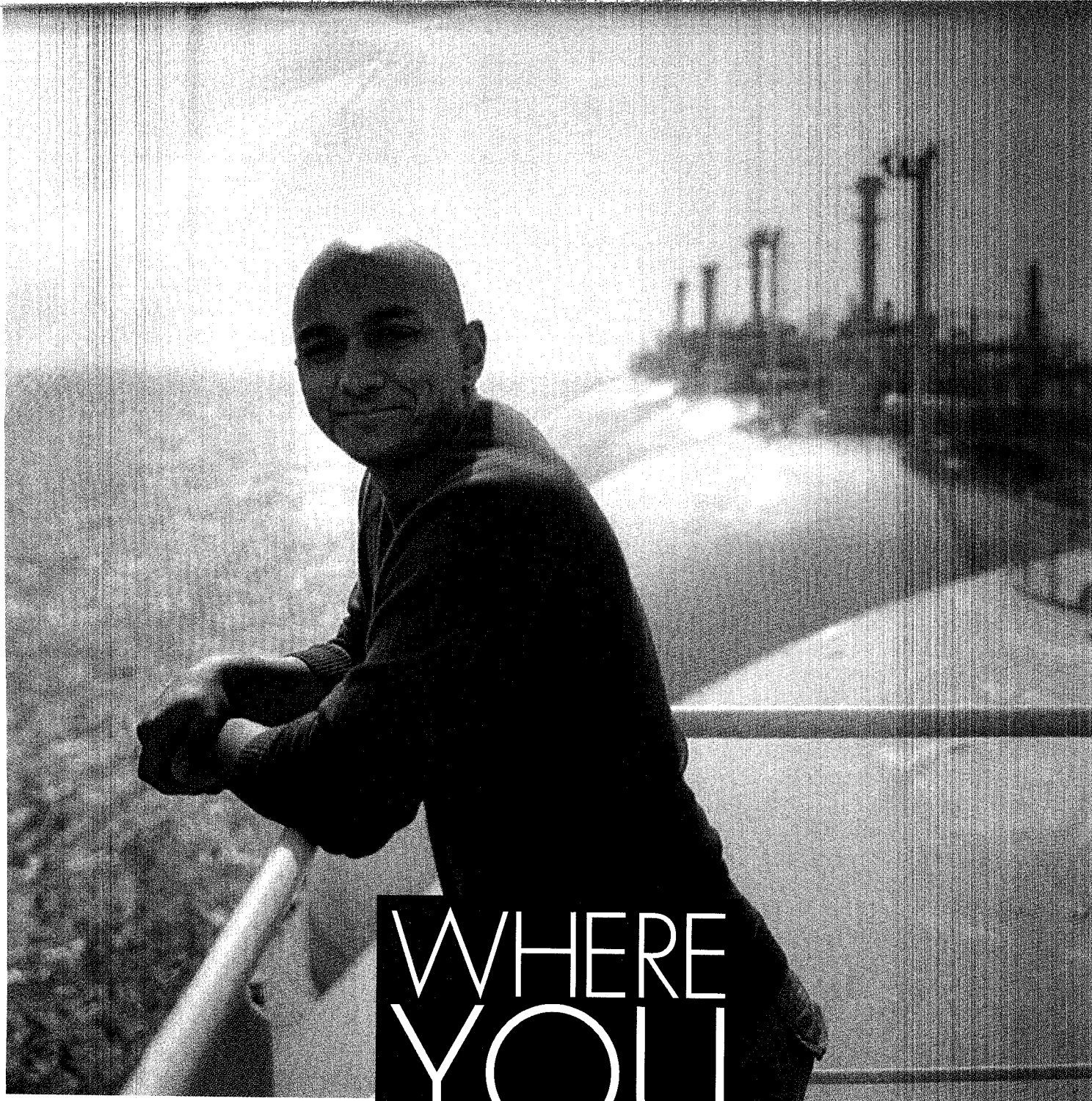
The billionaire entertainment mogul David Geffen raised about \$20 million for the President and his party during the Clinton years—perhaps as much as anyone else in the country. All he got was a sleepover in the Lincoln Bedroom and the knowledge that he was part of the inner circle of Clinton's “go-to” guys in town—hardly the sort of

quid pro quo one suspects when the President's friend and top contributor is, say, Enron's Kenneth Lay. Of course, for an openly gay man of modest birth (Geffen's parents sold bras in Brooklyn), such attention may not be negligible. Roger Lowenstein, a former scriptwriter for *L.A. Law* who is married to a former studio executive, speaks of what he calls the “mutual masturbation that goes on” between Hollywood and Washington—“they each want that thing that the other has and they can't have.” Hollywood yearns for gravitas, Washington for glamour.

Needless to say, Hollywood offers nearly limitless opportunities for anyone seeking to expose hypocrisy in the lifestyles of the rich and progressive. Laurie David, who dedicates herself to fighting for improved fuel-economy standards and reviles the owners of SUVs as terrorist enablers, gives herself a pass when it comes to chartering one of the most wasteful uses of fossil-based fuels imaginable: a private plane. (She's not just a limousine liberal; she's a Gulfstream liberal.) One night I visited the home of the former TV star Heather Thomas (*The Fall Guy*) and her husband, the entertainment lawyer and philanthropist Skip Brittenham. I drove past SUVs and assorted luxury vehicles on what felt like a quarter-mile-long driveway to a mansion large enough to house one of the small Amazonian villages the Brittenhams want to save. Just the energy consumed by the house and all the vehicles would power a sizable chunk of Amazonia. And this was nothing next to the Sunset Strip home of Stewart and Lynda Resnick, where I attended a book party for the journalist and progressive candidate-conspirator-hostess Arianna Huffington. Guests picked at smoked-salmon and caviar hors d'oeuvres beneath twenty-foot ceilings supported by towering Greek columns. Each gilded room was larger than most New York City apartments. The house would not be out of place if plunked down as an extension of Versailles, save for the enormous bust of Napoleon in one of the salons. The Resnicks, Lynda told me, are the “largest farmers in America”; they are the country's biggest grower of fruits and nuts, and a member of the Sunkist cooperative (she urged me to try the selection of new Sunkist beverages at the well-stocked bar); they also own the Franklin Mint. Later I listened to her refer to the celebrity-laden crowd as “disenfranchised.”

On occasions when I've mentioned such contradictions and blind spots to smart Hollywood fundraisers, the response has been not so much explanation or excuse as a plea for indulgence—as if one were, after all, dealing with children, children who are very good at sharing.

Speaking in broad terms, and allowing for considerable overlap, four kinds of people make the fundraising wheels spin in Hollywood: actors who dedicate themselves to political causes, raising money and consciousness without contributing large sums themselves; activists who seek to harness the money and the publicity of celebrity for liberal causes and candidates; private political consultants,



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who help rich donors navigate among the various groups and candidates seeking their largesse; and, finally, players—the major funders who raise or pay up the millions that make the game worth it.

THE ACTOR

Actors with causes are nothing new. Whether for reasons of public image, a desire for credibility, or the simple calculation—“If my privacy is going to be invaded and I’m going to be treated as a commodity, I might as well take advantage of it”—described by Susan Sarandon, the actor as spokesperson is a Hollywood phenotype. This sort of public figure inspires a degree of cynicism—quite properly, given how little is often required of the actor in terms of knowledge or commitment. Actors can often do as much harm as good to their causes. Madonna, for instance, did not turn out to be a terrifically effective spokesperson for Rock the Vote when it was later revealed that she had not bothered to vote in previous presidential elections. In an ad she was shown bikini-clad and flanked by two male dancers who alternated spanking her, illustrating her slogan “If you don’t vote, you’re going to get a spanking.”

One of the most sought-after liberal actors in Hollywood right now is Brad Whitford, who plays Josh Lyman, the deputy chief of staff on *The West Wing*. He and his wife, Jane Kaczmarek, who plays the mom on the popular Fox sitcom *Malcolm in the Middle*, function as a kind of political unit on the Hollywood political-social scene. One night not long ago I was asked by a couple of liberal organizations to give a talk about the media and George W. Bush at the home of Ted Williams, the former CEO of Bell Industries, and his wife, Rita; Whitford and Kaczmarek happened to be listed as the evening’s “conveners,” meaning that they came over after work to schmooze with the guests and introduce the speakers. Like most actors, they don’t have “real” money by Hollywood standards, and hence do most of their giving by just showing up or by signing letters and helping to attract the truly rich people they know.

Whitford and Kaczmarek are not strongly identified with any one cause or organization. Whitford later told me that the couple treat their celebrity as a commodity and look for ways to “spend it as wisely as we can.” They began with children’s charities such as Cure Autism Now and the Children’s Defense Fund, and moved on to a variety of causes and groups, including clean elections, gun control, abortion rights, Death Penalty Focus, the Union of Concerned Scientists, Refugees International, and the NRDC.

A few days later, sitting in his trailer on the set of *The West Wing* between takes of a scene in which Josh is trying to keep his cool after a terrorist attack on his assistant, Whitford ate fried chicken and mused on the state of American politics with an easy charm that a political consultant would kill to capture. He said he finds it “kind of pathetic” that he is not only often asked to make appearances with Democratic can-

didates but also encouraged to run for office himself. (His reply: “I don’t want to have to act that much.”)

As Whitford was speaking, I recalled a time before the 2000 Democratic convention when I walked into a party at a beach house in Malibu and did not immediately find anyone I knew. Eventually I spotted one familiar face, though I couldn’t remember why or how I knew its owner. I went over to say hello anyway, covering up the way one does. About twenty minutes into our talk I owned up to my confusion, and the man I was speaking with politely explained that this happened all the time. Few people know Brad Whitford, but everybody “knows” Josh, as I thought I did that night. It happened again when Whitford introduced me to the rest of the show’s cast members on the set. When we exchanged pleasantries, they were out of character. As a fan of the show, I know these people, even though the people I know do not really exist. That feeling is worth many millions in political donations.

The dirty little secret of Hollywood is that with few exceptions, stars don’t pay. They show up, look pretty, and on occasion even demand a check themselves.

Whitford told me that he and his wife “max out” in every election with hard-money contributions to candidates, but that those checks are insignificant compared with the amount they regularly raise by agreeing to grace an event with their presence. He will “strongly encourage” friends to give, Whitford said, but he has not yet taken the step of making fundraising calls himself. He has, however, made his own anti-Bush commercial. Excitedly he described the ad: Cue mansion with palm trees in the background, music swelling as in the post-9/11 Bush commercials. Whitford greets the viewer: “Welcome to my home. Hi. I’m very fortunate to be working on a television show right now. In this age of terror and soaring budget deficits, when our President has proposed cuts in veterans’ benefits and funds for children, I got a tax cut of over a hundred thousand dollars! Support the Hollywood elite. Please. Re-elect George Bush.”

THE ACTIVIST

Although most of “above the line” Hollywood—the line is the one separating management and creative talent from the production side of filmmaking—seems to share a set of political attitudes, those who actually spend time putting their ideals into practice are quite rare. A familiar complaint is that the same people show up at the meetings, whatever the issue. The filmmaker Robert Greenwald, who has recently decided to dedicate

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a considerable portion of his time to helping progressive organizations with various film projects, is everybody's idea of a committed activist. So are Alan Horn and his wife, Cindy; Horn founded Castle Rock Entertainment with Rob Reiner and others before becoming the president of Warner Brothers. Julie Bergman Sender, a former producer, has inherited political activism from her mother, Marilyn Bergman, and can be found at nearly any political gathering. The producer Sean Daniel and his wife, Ruth Hunter, a staffer for the NRDC, are likely to be asked to help with any new political effort, as are their friends Phil Robinson, the producer, and his partner, the singer Carole King. The actors Mike Farrell, Heather Thomas, Danny Glover, Ed Begley, and Ed and Cindy Asner (her business card actually reads "political activist") all get involved, organizing pressure groups, study sessions, lobbying trips, and, occasionally, demonstrations, and enduring the inevitable snarky comments from the right. But in the past year or so, much of the focus has been on Laurie David.

A pretty, brassy Jewish girl from Merrick, Long Island, whose close friends describe her as "pushy," David is one of those people who carry energy as if it were a communicable disease. I first met her early last year, in Washington, at a political meeting where I was speaking and she was working the room, having accompanied her friend Arianna Huffington on a networking trip. Laurie Lennard was a booker for David Letterman and then a personal manager and a producer; she produced a short-lived sitcom for the comedian Chris Elliott, called *Get a Life*, just when her husband's *Seinfeld* was becoming the most successful sitcom in the history of television. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., her friend and political ally, likens her to "one of those [Hollywood] producers who are always saying we'll order up a helicopter to get the shot."

At the final rehearsal for the big NRDC show, a day before the event, I saw what he meant. David simultaneously encouraged the performers and gave them criticism on their presentations; worked with the writers to make last-minute improvements; and directed celebrity traffic (would Leonardo DiCaprio mind waiting five minutes for his run-through while Meg Ryan practiced her introduction of Robert Kennedy?). When Eric Idle rehearsed "The FCC Song," whose chorus includes the line "Fuck you very much, Dickhead Mr. Cheney," David handled the taste problem with tough-minded finesse, and Idle did not perform in the show.

David's enthusiasm for environmental activism puzzles some who have long known her (David herself talks, somewhat lamely, about a lifelong obsession with litter)—including her husband, who told me he had detected none of it until his *Seinfeld* earnings made her a rich woman. (Her line on this topic is "I want to thank my husband, whose disdain for mankind has allowed me to work on its behalf.") "I heard nothing about the environment for all our lives," Larry David says, "and now this. I wish she would at least

take back her own name." As for professional advice, Larry's only note to his wife on her public-speaking engagements, he tells me, is "Not so Jewish." Laurie David credits Alan Horn and Rob Reiner with awakening her interest in the NRDC. A meeting was arranged with the group's president, John Adams, at Reiner's Beverly Hills office, and she was sold, she says: "John was like a rock star to me." Two weeks later Adams returned to L.A. with Robert Kennedy in tow to have breakfast with the Davids and cement the alliance.

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David's combination of moxie and money has made her the It Girl of Hollywood progressive politics. She invited John McCain to dinner so that she could try to talk him into switching to the Democratic Party. (She failed.) John Edwards, a guest early in his presidential candidacy, was interrogated on his so-so environmental record. And then there are the fundraisers. In March the Davids hosted 200 people at a \$1,000-a-plate party for Barbara Boxer, California's junior senator, who is up for re-election this fall. Larry David says that he forgot about the Boxer event, only to come home and see "all these cars parked." "Next thing I knew," he says, "Bill Clinton was showing up. I'm proud of my wife and I do support her, but there are other houses out here. Sometimes I think she thinks this is the only house in L.A. But what do you want me to do? Stay up in my room? I do roll my eyes a lot."

Most of Laurie David's efforts are directed toward the NRDC and its campaign for stricter fuel-economy standards. But like every other liberal except perhaps Ralph Nader, David knows that the biggest target of all is George W. Bush, and she recently threw herself into a leading role in organizing Hollywood to support America Coming Together. Before joining ACT's finance committee, David sought entrée with a donation of \$100,000. A number of Hollywood activists think she is taking a larger than warranted role, given that her wealth would allow her to be far more generous. These people, none of whom are willing to be named, told me that David tried to get away with giving ACT a mere \$10,000, but was told that ten times that amount would be the minimum for the role she planned to play. (The biggest funders of ACT and its related organization, The Media Fund, are Soros and his philanthropic

partner, Peter Lewis, who have given about \$5 million each, and Bing, who has given \$6.9 million.)

The question of just how much is enough is tricky in the Hollywood community. Nobody knows exactly how much money anyone else has. For instance, most media reports put Larry David's take from *Seinfeld's* syndication at around \$250 million. Laurie says this figure is vastly inflated: "Maybe we'll get that much over the next hundred years." But Rob Reiner, whose Castle Rock Entertainment produced the show, told me he imagined that the figure could go even higher. Moreover, nobody knows just how much anybody is giving to anybody else, especially because a lot of people prefer to give quietly, so as not to inspire requests from others. Then there is the question of relativity. For most of us, donating \$2,000 to a candidate or a cause would mean taking the money from somewhere else—skipping a vacation or buying a less fancy car. But if we had a portfolio of \$50 million or \$100 million, we wouldn't even notice. Who is to decide what is appropriate? Rob Reiner told me of the time Representative Jane Harman sat on his couch and asked him for \$25,000 for her campaign for the California governorship, because "that's what Steven Spielberg is giving." Reiner says he replied, "Well, I'm going to give you even more than Steven gave." Harman's excitement level no doubt rose, only to fall when Reiner said she'd get \$5,000. "That was five times to me what twenty-five was to Steven," he told me, laughing.

Talking to me in his office over salad and CNN, Larry David admitted that if he were married to someone else, "chances are [the NRDC] would never have seen a nickel from me." Playing to type, he went on, "Personally, I would give money away to people, because then I could get the personal satisfaction of playing the benefactor and have the obligation for the rest of my life. I would enjoy that." In the same spirit, he took the opportunity to deny that he bought his high-mileage hybrid Toyota Prius (for which he is held up as a role model) for any noble environmental reasons. "The Prius is the only car that didn't have that console in the way, which gives you more legroom. That's why I bought it. I liked the legroom and I liked the way it looked. The gas mileage was last on my list. If anybody says I bought it for [Laurie], I'll punch them in the mouth."

When I asked Laurie David about the dispute over her ACT donation, she did not exactly deny the story, but she did say that she is still learning how to give away money and thinks that \$100,000 was "an appropriate number." She continued, "Larry and I didn't have two nickels together when we got engaged." When, suddenly, they had gazillions of dollars, she needed to learn how to write "a thousand-dollar check, then five, then ten, then a hundred, then half a million." "Then," she said, "you learn how to give million-dollar gifts to things you really care about."

David's high profile notwithstanding, there is on occasion something a little ingenuous in her approach. She

told me, for instance, that she will never again support Tom Daschle, the Senate minority leader, because he voted in favor of Bush's energy bill. When I pointed out how important its ethanol provisions were to Daschle's South Dakota constituents, David was unmoved: "That energy bill is evil. What is this guy doing with his life? Sometimes the stakes are so high you take the hit. And this was one of those cases."

Adamantine adherence to political principle is nothing new, of course. Ronald Brownstein, a *Los Angeles Times* political reporter, recalls in *The Power and the Glitter*, his history of the relationship between Washington and Hollywood, that in the mid-1980s Hollywood liberals' "ideological purity" often put them on a collision course with even the politicians they championed. I called Barney Frank, the liberal Massachusetts congressman and expert legislative strategist (who is considering a Senate run should John Kerry become President, and hence was considering a trip to Hollywood), to ask him whether he thought it was a good thing for liberals to play this kind of hardball against their own. He had a strong opinion. "I think it's a mistake for Laurie David to tell Tom Daschle she won't support him because of the energy bill," he said. "It's never going to change his mind. Nobody is going to allow themselves to get in trouble at home to get Hollywood money. Money is a means to the end. Votes are the end. You'd have to be a terrible politician to confuse those two things."

THE CONSULTANT

In a town where people have agents, publicists, and managers on call, not to mention manicurists, pedicurists, and plastic surgeons, it is not such a stretch to have a personal political consultant. If a celebrity or a producer is giving a ton of money away, it hardly makes sense to do so without the guidance of someone who understands how to make that money go the furthest.

It is the consultant's job to know which organizations are doing the most innovative work and who are the rising stars of the Democratic Party. The policy institutes of the East Coast corridor do not play the same role in Hollywood that they do in Washington—bringing policy wonks and politicians together. Few people in the movie business are interested in the intricacies of policy for policy's sake. The issue at hand is always who can make something happen, and who therefore deserves to get the check. The heads of certain liberal think tanks in the East—Lawrence Mishel, of the Economic Policy Institute; Bob Greenstein, of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; John Podesta, of the recently formed Center for American Progress (where I am a senior fellow)—often strategize on the phone with Hollywood consultants, and occasionally make the trek to Los Angeles for a fundraising dinner. But this is nowhere near as intimate as the relationships these same people have with reporters, editors, and like-minded policymak-

ers in Washington, New York, and Boston. When it comes to policy, Hollywood is willing to sign on the dotted line and leave the deep thinking to others.

Richard Foos, for example, made millions when he sold Rhino Records to Warner Brothers and started a new production company. He always gave a certain amount of money to politicians and causes. This year George W. Bush inspired him to step up his political giving, and he is planning to triple his donations. Foos knew he didn't know all he needed to about how to make his money work the way he wanted it to. Fortunately, he had already become friendly with someone whose life's work is directing such giving: Marge Tabankin.

Tabankin is the dean, or perhaps the den mother, of Hollywood political consultants. An activist since the 1960s, when she worked with the community organizer Saul Alinsky, she became the director of VISTA under President Jimmy Carter, and later the director of the Hollywood Women's Political Committee. Tabankin provides much of political Hollywood's institutional memory and a considerable part of its practical training and education. In a town known for its obsession with thinness, Tabankin looks not unlike a kinder, gentler Bella Abzug, with warm green eyes and an inviting smile. People who have worked

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with her describe her as detail-oriented and unimpressed by the trappings of celebrity that surround her. She can often be found in her office in the evening and on weekends, stuffing envelopes with her assistants and making important phone calls. At a fundraiser she is more likely to be worrying about whether the nametags are spelled right than to be gossiping with celebrities.

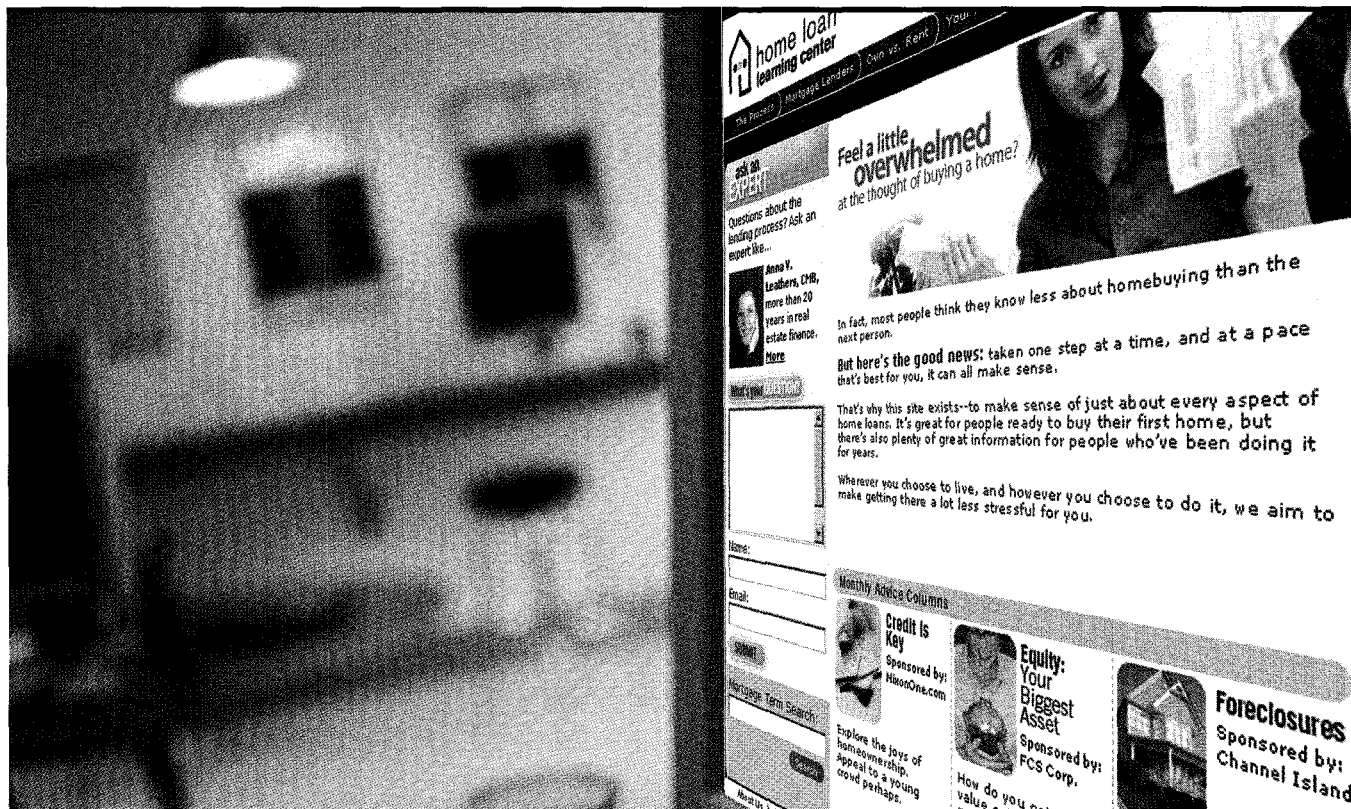
The fellowship of Hollywood political consultants is small, and its members take their politics seriously. Donna Bojarsky, who works with Richard Dreyfuss and Norm Patiz, the owner of the radio network Westwood One, says, "Everyone believes Hollywood to be so seductive, but we all came from politics and none of us have slid over into entertainment." Along with Tabankin and Bojarsky, the top consultants include Andy Spahn, at DreamWorks SKG; Joyce Deep, who advises Robert Redford and Quincy Jones; Laura Hartigan, who left the Democratic National Com-

mittee to work for Haim Saban; and Chad Griffin, who is Rob Reiner's go-to guy. The consultants are political pros who know how to plant stories and can alternate between "background," "off the record," and "not for attribution" as skillfully as any White House press aide. They are paid generously by Washington's standards, though they are paupers by Hollywood's. Tabankin says that a typical fee is "five to ten percent of the payout"; this figure tends to hit a ceiling, she says, of about \$100,000 per client. A successful consultant has two to four clients, but Tabankin estimates that no Hollywood consultant makes more than \$250,000 a year.

This year perhaps the most visible consultant is Lara Bergthold, the Kerry campaign's deputy director with responsibility for Hollywood. In a sign of the new seriousness with which politicians take the entertainment community's ability to help, the campaign decided that Bergthold's position would involve both "creative" and "finance" responsibilities; that is, she would work on both message and money, rather than on fundraising alone. Bergthold, whose healthy California-girl good looks belie her political savvy, told me recently that in her first week on the job her biggest problem was not recruiting contributors and advisers but handling all the offers coming in. She is a Tabankin protégé: one of her first jobs was working with Tabankin on the HWPC.

The one Hollywood consultant nobody in Democratic politics can afford to alienate is Andy Spahn. Though no one at DreamWorks has a title, Spahn's corporate-relations portfolio covers a host of responsibilities in addition to politics and philanthropy, and he has a staff of ten spread around the DreamWorks headquarters, which are on a tree-lined street in Beverly Hills. Light-haired and ruggedly handsome, Spahn is about as buttoned down as anyone in Hollywood today—which means he wears an open-necked oxford shirt, a sports jacket, and khakis rather than a cashmere V-neck. Behind his quiet, corporate-smoothie demeanor lies a venerable background in leftist politics. Tom Hayden, who hired Spahn in the 1980s to work with the Campaign for Economic Democracy, remembers Spahn's getting dragged away by the police at an anti-apartheid rally, his long hair flying. (Another consultant recalls seeing snapshots of Spahn wearing coal-black eyeliner at the time, à la David Bowie.) After Hayden was elected to the state senate, with Spahn's help, Spahn went to Washington and became a top fundraiser for Democratic politicians and political organizations. He returned to Hollywood and helped build a series of progressive organizations before being hired by David Geffen. After the creation of DreamWorks SKG its three founding partners—Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and Geffen—asked Spahn to handle politics and philanthropy for the corporation as a whole.

Those in a position to know say Spahn is perhaps the best in Hollywood at raising hard money—increasingly difficult



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in the McCain-Feingold era. It is now a lot tougher to raise \$100,000 for a candidate, with checks of just \$2,000 apiece, than it was two years ago to raise two or three million in soft-money contributions. Spahn and Katzenberg went over their lists and came up with around \$150,000 for John Kerry's first big Hollywood fundraiser, at Ron Burkle's home. To the degree that Lew Wasserman's world lives on at all in Hollywood, it does so in the combination of the DreamWorks partners' power and Andy Spahn's phone calls and lists.

THE PLAYER

To be a player is to be able to call the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, or Democratic leaders in Congress, and have them drop everything to take your call. It means you can get on the President's schedule—if the President happens to be Bill Clinton—and suggest that he make a few calls, and those calls will be made. Of the tiny number of people who might be said to inhabit the rarefied world of players, the most exclusive category of all in Hollywood, most have bought their way in. They donate millions or raise millions or, most likely, both. David Geffen and his DreamWorks partners fit into this category, as do Haim Saban, Ron Burkle, Barbra Streisand, and Norman Lear. But only one Hollywood player at this level gained membership without buying it: Rob Reiner.

Of course there's also Robert Redford, who in many ways represents the Hollywood player's idea of perfection itself. When the NRDC sends out a mass mailing, the return address reads only "Robert Redford," as if that ought to be enough to get any sane person to open a piece of junk mail. Not only has Redford shown up and raised millions for the past three decades, but he has developed expertise regarding his chosen issues that would rival that of just about any member of Congress, and, more to the point, his or her staffers as well. When you sit down to talk to him about, say, carbon dioxide emissions and their relation to chlorofluorocarbons, it's almost possible to forget you're talking to Robert Redford. What's more, Redford puts his name on the line to try to solve environmental problems by bringing various sides of a dispute together for conferences, seminars, and negotiating sessions. But the admiration he inspires is probably equaled in the industry by resentment of his quite public desire to keep as much distance as possible between himself and the traditional Hollywood movie business while making sure he remains one of the world's biggest movie stars. Redford lives on a mountain in Utah, but in the eyes of Hollywood it might as well be Mount Olympus.

Whereas Rob Reiner lives, breathes, and eats Hollywood. The son of the comedian Carl Reiner, he grew up around the likes of Mel Brooks and Norman Lear. (Reiner bought Lear's old, modest-for-Hollywood, country-style house in Brentwood years ago—the house in which Henry Fonda raised his famous family.) His comfortable, earth-toned office is ornamented by the Hollywood mogul's requisite movie post-

ers and family photos. Although not particularly wealthy by industry standards (when pressed, he will acknowledge a net worth of somewhere between \$10 million and \$50 million), Reiner has political smarts that enable him to play the game at a level way above his pay grade.

No Hollywood partnership with a Democratic presidential nominee has been as close as Reiner's was with Al Gore—at least not since Warren Beatty helped run George McGovern's campaign, in 1972. Reiner and the campaign's chief speechwriter, Eli Attie, were the only non-family members in the Gore residence on that fateful December night in 2000 when the U.S. Supreme Court handed the presidency to George W. Bush. Conservative pundits may relish the notion of a onetime presidential nominee's huddling with Meathead, but Reiner is one of America's most astute and effective political strategists. "Rob could have made his living in my business," says Paul Begala, the *Crossfire* host and former Clinton aide.

Rob Reiner lives, breathes, and eats Hollywood. Although not particularly wealthy by Hollywood standards, he has political smarts that enable him to play the game at a level way above his pay grade.

The demand for Reiner's talents as a campaigner, a strategist, and—not least—a fundraiser is intense. During one of our interviews he took a call from *The West Wing's* creator, Aaron Sorkin, who agreed to help write an anti-Bush commercial Reiner had promised to make for MoveOn.org. When Al Gore announced in 2002, on *60 Minutes*, that he had decided against running for President, Reiner came to work the next morning to find four phone messages waiting for him: one from Howard Dean, one from John Kerry, one from John Edwards, and another from Howard Dean. (He went with Dean.) For all Reiner's intimacy with Gore and Dean, though, their careers failed to advance to the next stage. National politics is a cruel mistress.

Reiner operates on all levels; for instance, he managed two successful California ballot initiatives. He works with Chad Griffin, whom he met in Washington in 1994, when Griffin helped him authenticate the script and sets for *The American President*, a film set in the White House. Griffin, who took two years off between the University of Arkansas and Georgetown to work at the White House, was heading for a job at the State Department; Reiner asked him to go west and head his I Am Your Child Foundation instead. With an ambitious PR campaign the two men helped assemble a coalition to prevent the building of a luxury golf-course

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community on a 2,800-acre nature preserve called the Ahmanson Ranch, in the Santa Monica Mountains of Ventura County, leading to the state's purchase and protection of the land. In their first ballot initiative they succeeded in passing a fifty-cents-a-pack cigarette tax and then creating a mechanism for distributing the resulting \$650 million a year to pre-kindergarten programs. Reiner now chairs the state commission that decides how the money is to be spent.

Taking on the tobacco industry is about as expensive a proposition as can be found in American politics. Tobacco companies spent more than \$30 million to bury the initiative; Reiner and Griffin raised \$9 million to fight back. Reiner put up \$1.5 million of his own, and his parents gave another million. Other top funders included Steve Bing (\$1.8 million), Ron Burkle (just over \$1 million), and Haim Saban (\$500,000).

Reiner is unsure what he will do next. Initially he and Griffin were hoping to take on California's sacred cow, Proposition 13, which caps property taxes and hence starves public education, but they decided to hold off when they realized that they would be facing as many as a dozen other ballot initiatives this November. A prohibitive amount of money would be required just to get the public's attention. "We would have to raise at least thirty to forty million just to break through," he says. He is, however, continuing his work on legislation to ensure that children all over the state have access to preschool programs—work that will most likely result in a 2006 ballot initiative. Also looming is a possible candidacy for governor. Reiner did not throw his hat into the ring during the recall last year because, he says, he "didn't think it was a proper way to run a democracy." The governor's office is now occupied by Reiner's friend and neighbor Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose celebrity vastly exceeds Reiner's. Reiner tells me that he has entertained thoughts of being governor; a run would more likely be in 2010 than 2006 (when someone will have to challenge the now popular "Governator"). Don't bet against him.

On a balmy night last spring liberal Hollywood descended on the billionaire Ron Burkle's five-acre estate, "Green Acres," to get the first good look at its party's new standard-bearer, John Kerry. Burkle's forty-room, twenty-six-bathroom Beverly Hills mansion, built by the silent-film star Harold Lloyd in 1929, was also used by its previous owner, the producer Ted Field, for liberal fundraisers. Burkle, the supermarket magnate, is a believer in the separation of supermarket and state ("The first thing

they teach you in checkout-counter school," he has said, "is not to talk politics or religion with the customers"). Those five acres of personal territory were saturated with politics that night. Inside the gates big donors—people committed to giving at least \$50,000—were whisked up a hill, past a Spanish-style fountain, to the expansive house, where they got face time with the candidate and his wife. After an hour or so of schmoozing with the fat cats, Kerry went outside onto the enormous L-shaped lawn to join 2,000 other people and listen to James Taylor sing and Larry David tell jokes. When he took the stage himself, Kerry did a reasonable job of exciting the crowd. The evening resulted in \$3 million in hard-money contributions for his campaign, and another \$1 million for the DNC.

It may be true, as the Bush campaign spokesperson Terry Holt insists, that "this campaign will not be won in Hollywood." But it will be at least partly financed there. And it will be financed smartly and professionally, with a view toward the main event and a wariness of distracting side-shows. At a gathering at the lush Santa Monica estate of the screenwriter Steve Byrnes and the lawyer Jamie Mandelbaum, for instance, the difference in sensibility between those in Hollywood who spend a lot of time on politics and those who don't was on clear display. One of the more casually political people in the room expressed a desire that John Kerry would "show moral leadership" in embracing gay marriage, and received no encouragement whatever—this in a group of people for whom gay marriage is perhaps less controversial than the heterosexual kind. Right now nobody in Hollywood who plays politics seriously is talking about how to make the Democrats more liberal. Rather, screenwriter after producer after actor after director at the gathering spoke only of the desire to help Democrats win.

During the Democratic-primary season various candidates enjoyed moments of favorable buzz within the community, and each—John Kerry, alas, excepted—drew on a substantial celebrity contingent. Since Kerry's success, despite his unpopular vote for the war and his near complete lack of Clintonesque charisma, everyone has fallen into line. (Ralph Nader has absolutely no fans in higher Hollywood.) As Julie Bergman Sender put it, "We are not in the luxury position of being able to choose the perfect candidate this time around. If it's John Kerry, that's fine. The house is on fire—we just have to put it out."

George W. Bush, who promised to be "a uniter, not a divider," may not have proved to be one in America as a whole. But in Hollywood, at least, he has kept his word. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION *The Power and the Glitter: The Hollywood-Washington Connection* (Pantheon Books, 1990), by Ronald Brownstein, is the book on Hollywood and politics, ranging from the 1920s, when President Herbert Hoover massaged the ego of Louis B. Mayer with a trip to Florida, to the late 1980s, when young Brat Packers gathered at political meetings in hopes that politics, like glasses, would make them look serious. The Center for Responsive Politics illuminates the arcane world of campaign finance on its easy-to-use and comprehensive Web site, www.opensecrets.org, where you can track the contributions of everyone from your next-door neighbor to Michael Moore, and also see what industries give the most money, who is getting it, and what they're doing with it.

PEACEABLE KINGDOM

by Henry Taylor

.....

A CROSSTOWN BREEZE

A drift of wind
when August wheeled
brought back to mind
an alfalfa field

where green windrows
bleached down to hay
while storm clouds rose
and rolled our way.

With lighthearted strain
in our pastoral agon
we raced the rain
with baler and wagon,

driving each other
to hold the turn
out of the weather
and into the barn.

A nostalgic pause
claims we saved it all,
but I've known the loss
of the lifelong haul;

now gray concrete
and electric light
wear on my feet
and dull my sight.

So I keep asking,
as I stand here,
my cheek still basking
in that trick of air,

would I live that life
if I had the chance,
or is it enough
to have been there once?

AFTER HIGH WATER

We park the car,
pick our way over washed-out stone
to the bridge, and stare
at what can be wrought in a single afternoon.

The air is wholly calm;
gnats drift unbuffeted between here where we stand
and the almost motionless surface film
above the minnows. Lift your hand:

the point it marks in the sunlight represents
the level floodwaters reached in less
than half a day. To left and right the rusty pasture fence
is bearded with muddy grass,

except where it is broken
by the passage of a tree, or most of one. Today
sun burns, flat grass unbends, and minnows betoken
the seeming return of all that was swept away.

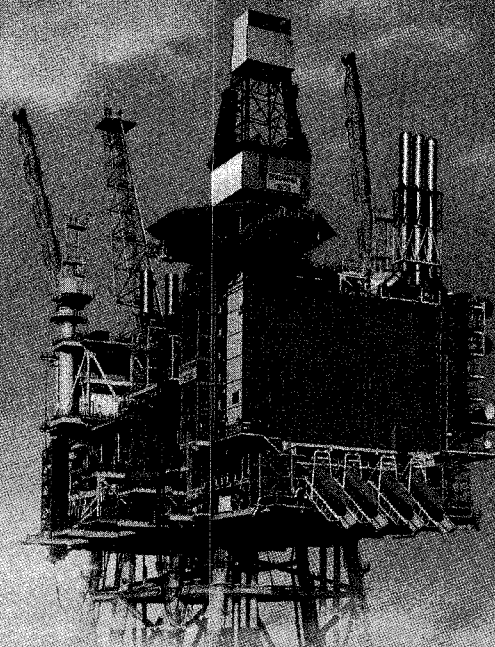
A SET OF HOOFPRIINTS

A horse left this track as he walked.
Here a fore hoof made its print,
obscured as if by superscript
when hind came down where fore had been.
He turns toward home, extends his walk
till hind far overreaches fore
and every hoofprint is distinct.
You stand remembering how it felt
to sit those homeward-swinging strides,
to draw up by the darkening barn
and let your own feet touch the ground.

Henry Taylor received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1986 for The Flying Change. His most recent collection is Brief Candles: 101 Clerihews (2000).

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IN SEARCH OF A POPE

*Media commentators love to speculate about the power politics of the next conclave.
They keep forgetting about the most important factor of all*

BY PAUL ELIE

Illustration by Marc Yankus

.....

In the summer of 1976 Karol Wojtyla, the archbishop of Kraków, spent six weeks traveling in North America. He gave a lecture at Harvard, addressed a crowd of 40,000 people during an event in Philadelphia (Mother Teresa was the headliner), and went west with the city's archbishop, Cardinal John Krol, a son of Polish immigrants, to meet American Catholics of Polish descent. He celebrated masses, attended testimonial dinners, and hashed out theology with seminarians. He declined an invitation to the White House, lest the meeting be seen as an endorsement of Gerald Ford's bid to retain the presidency; he arrived three hours late for a meeting at the archbishop's residence in Boston, having spent the morning floating on a raft on a lake in Vermont. The visit, his second, was by all accounts a typical trip by a foreign prelate, and even his devoutest biographers depict it as one of no great consequence.

Two years later Karol Wojtyla was elected Pope. From the moment his name was announced to the crowd awaiting word outside the Sistine Chapel, the story of his election was the story of how unlikely a Pope he was: the first non-Italian in 455 years, a Pole from behind the Iron Curtain of atheistic communism. Yet Wojtyla was no stranger in Vatican City. As his biographer George Weigel observes, he was "one of the most widely respected senior leaders in Roman Catholicism": a bishop at age thirty-eight and a cardinal at forty-seven, an active participant in the Second Vatican Council, and a favorite of Paul VI, who in 1976 chose him to lead the papal household's Lenten retreat. He was as familiar in Vatican City as he was obscure in Los Angeles.

Speaking from the portico of Saint Peter's Basilica, the new Pope introduced himself to the crowd below as a man called to the papacy "from a far country." Twenty-six years later the pontificate of John Paul II is recognized as a distinct chapter in the Church's history; and it is clear that the papacy, and the Church, bear the strong impression of his character: a blend of deep faith and shrewd calculation, of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, of charm and blunt

rhetorical force, of doctrinal fixity and personal daring. And yet John Paul, so emphatic on so many points, has left one question unanswered.

Who will be the next Pope? While in Rome not long ago, finding myself with a free hour on the Vatican side of the Tiber, I paid a visit to Saint Peter's. I strode through the metal detector, past Michelangelo's *Pietà*, past the bronze of Saint Peter himself, past the forbidding sculpture of Pius XII and the glass-encased remains of John XXIII, past the high altar, and to Bernini's famous rendering of the Holy Spirit as a giant dove in flight in glass the color of a single-malt Scotch. I opened a guidebook. Below the Holy Spirit, roped off to keep pilgrims at a distance, is the Altar of the Chair, a grand Baroque symbol of the papacy. The altar proper is surmounted by an empty chair, once thought to be that of the saint himself, and flanked by four black marble figures, two of them wearing bishops' miters. In the shadows those bishops' faces are hard to make out, and I couldn't tell one from another.

I tried to picture a successor to John Paul celebrating mass at that altar, but I could bring no distinct image to mind. I suspect that few Catholics would be able to. John Paul's foreign trips have placed tens of millions of us in his presence, but have left an image of him as a lonely man of faith, all by himself at the top of the Vatican pyramid. The more we know about him, the less we know, it seems, about the men who work alongside him, and who will elect his successor from among themselves. American Catholics, especially, like to propose that the Church be governed more democratically; but if we were invited to elect the next Pope, we wouldn't know where to begin.

Today, at age eighty-four, stooped and shaken by Parkinson's disease, struggling even to conduct a half-hour audience from the papal apartments, John Paul is on the *via dolorosa* of his pilgrimage, and the delicate business of papal succession is uppermost in the minds of even his most stoic admirers. Ever since he was wounded by a would-be assassin's bullet, in 1981, everyone from the Vatican sec-

Paul Elie, a senior editor with Farrar, Straus and Giroux, is the author of The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage (2003).

retary of state to the editor of the *National Enquirer* has pondered the prospect of his death. When he broke his leg and had a hip replaced in 1994, forcing him to cancel a North American trip, speculation about his demise began in earnest. The end of a pontificate that began unexpectedly has been anticipated long in advance.

When John Paul does die, some 120 cardinals and as many as 10,000 journalists will converge on Rome. Along the Via della Conciliazione, which leads from the Tiber to Saint Peter's Square, suites leased long in advance for the views they afford of the papal apartments and the Sistine Chapel will be converted into television studios, and the wall-to-wall coverage will begin.

In the meantime, the expert commentators have begun prognosticating. There now exist half a dozen books in English that describe the process of papal succession in all its particulars: the funeral rites; the makeup of the College of Cardinals; the chemical composition of the black smoke ("still deliberating") and the white smoke ("we have a Pope") that issue from the Sistine Chapel furnace; the rules for keeping secrets in an age of mobile telephones; the layout of Casa Santa Marta, the dormitory ("more like a Holiday Inn than a Ritz-Carlton," one insider reports) built to house the cardinal electors, who during past conclaves slept in drafty offices near the Sistine Chapel, trudging to common toilets in the night.

Inevitably, each of these books culminates in a survey of the field of *papabili*: the cardinals thought likely candidates to succeed John Paul II. Here are each man's qualifications and experience: the languages he speaks, the Church agencies he serves, the allies and antagonists he is said to have made in Vatican City. But these capsule biographies, so full of detail, have little of value to say about the character and beliefs of the different cardinals—and even less about which of them might actually wind up as Pope.

These books suggest that when it comes to characterizing the Church's leadership, even the experts are amateurs. It is tempting to blame the problem on the Vatican, a place where overt displays of personality are discouraged, or on John Paul, whose outsize character has dwarfed the men who surround him. But it is hard not to conclude, reading these books, that the experts are asking the wrong questions, following a script that has been written, in effect, by twenty centuries of precedent.

Somewhere in the papal apartments is kept a silver hammer that bears on its head the coat of arms and motto ("*Totus Tuus*," or "All Yours") of John Paul's pontificate. When John Paul dies, the silver hammer will be put to use, an act the books describe with relish. It will be taken up by the cardinal archbishop known as the *camerlengo*, or chamberlain—currently Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo, a Spaniard. Summoned to the Pope's side, Martínez Somalo will call out the Pope's given name three times: "Karol, Karol, Karol." If there is no response, he will rap the ham-

mer on the Pope's forehead to make sure that he is dead; then he will remove the papal ring from the dead man's hand and smash the ring with the hammer.

The smashing of the "ring of the Fisherman" once had practical utility: because the ring was used to stamp the wax that sealed papal documents, it had to be destroyed to prevent a pretender from issuing dicta in the Pope's name. Today the ritual has only a symbolic significance, but the symbolism is striking. As it sets in motion the election of the next Pope, it serves as a reminder that the papacy is not passed on but taken up afresh—that it is recast by each man who occupies the office, and that the process by which a new Pope is chosen is something other than a simple succession.

The Papacy presents the most remarkable spectacle in history of old age in action. Most of the pontiffs were elected at an age when a king would have been considered fit only for abdication, yet the invigorating effect of St Peter's Chair is well known."

By now the manner of writing about a Pope in decline is as ritualized as a Holy Thursday mass at Saint Peter's. The remark above is taken from *A Traveller in Rome*, by the English writer H. V. Morton, and although the book was published in 1957, as Pius XII, near the end of a nineteen-year pontificate, struggled with an acute case of the hiccups, it might have been published yesterday, so familiar is the rhetoric of reverent overstatement to which writers on assignment in the Eternal City are prone. "There probably has never been a Pope who is more certain to be canonized than Pius XII," Morton declared; he went on to catalogue the Pope's worldly achievements—"he is the first Pope to have flown, to descend into a mine, and to visit a submarine"—and to exclaim about the "astounding changes" that "in less than a century" had extended the Pope's realm "into the minds and consciences of some four hundred million people in all parts of the world."

Now as then, the Vatican correspondent is a travel writer of sorts, explaining the local customs and folkways. This was more conspicuously true half a century ago, when the lingua franca was Latin and the Pope seldom left the premises, and naturally it fell to priests to interpret the workings of the Holy See to outsiders. During the Second Vatican Council the American Redemptorist Francis X. Murphy turned the priestly insider's chronicle into an art form. Appointed a *peritus*, or theological adviser, at the council, Murphy contrived to have his observations published as a "Letter From Vatican City" in *The New Yorker*. Over four years a dozen long "Letters" followed, each printed over the pseudonym Xavier Rynne. It was as if A. J. Liebling had donned a cassock and taken up residence in Vatican City. Rynne's identity was a secret even among the bishops, and his familiar tone suggested that he was an intimate of Pope John XXIII, whom he characterized as a man very much like himself—a simple



Christian, at once charming and crafty, who had called the council to the shock of the Roman Curia, the clerical elite who attend to the daily business of the Church, and then “hustled his procrastinating pastors and theologians” into embracing his ideas about “how the Christian life should be pursued in today’s world.”

Read today, Rynne’s letters seem overly detailed and often musty in their Latinisms (“Anything but a superficial observation of the first session of Vatican Council II at this time would be temerarious,” one piece began), but they influenced the thinking of many American Catholics now over fifty, and set the tone for much progressive Catholic journalism. As the priest and conservative commentator Richard John Neuhaus later wrote, in them the council was made out to be “a tale of good liberals against bad conservatives, good progressives against bad traditionalists,” and “the good guys were winning every round.”

Pope John died (Rynne reported) at 7:49 P.M. on June 3, 1963. Using the Pope’s baptismal name, he pronounced a panegyric in the plain American idiom he had managed to make seem the Pope’s own: “Angelo Roncalli did what he said the Council would do: he opened the windows of the Church and let in fresh air.” Of the new Pope, Giovanni Battista Montini of Milan, Rynne observed that his “most striking single act” was his choice of the name Paul, after the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul VI was dubbed “the pilgrim Pope,” and in the early years of his pontificate he made

the moniker fit. He initiated many practices now associated with John Paul II—he knelt and kissed the ground during a visit to Colombia, celebrated mass in Yankee Stadium, and internationalized the College of Cardinals, in which Italians predominated.

Paul was more complex and less vivid than John, at once a master and a captive of the Curia from which he had sprung, and this circumstance informs the work of Peter Hebblethwaite, Xavier Rynne’s successor as the most prominent English-language *Vaticanista*. An Englishman and a former priest, Hebblethwaite wrote for both the sober English Jesuit journal *The Month* and the progressive *National Catholic Reporter*, based in Kansas City. He rated Paul (whose biography he wrote) a great man and a great Pope for supervising “the implementation of the Council” and keeping peace between European traditionalists and New World radicals; but as the council receded, there was less and less to report. Hebblethwaite quoted a Vatican official’s tart assessment of the relationship between the Curia and the aging Pope: “They treat him as though he were already dead.”

When it came, Paul’s death, at age eighty (9:40 P.M., August 6, 1978), set off what Hebblethwaite called “the year of three popes.” Cardinals (111 of them) and journalists (2,000) hastened to sweltering Rome, where the Pope’s body lay decomposing in Saint Peter’s. Hebblethwaite reported on the conclave for Harold Evans’s *Sunday Times* of London, and his approach—part theology, part strategy—set the pattern for the present “next conclave” reporting. He pointed out that in naming new cardinals Paul had been “building up the college that would elect his successor,” and that in the age of jet travel, “the cardinals at the next conclave would know each other better than ever before.” He mapped out a fault line between conservatives (who wished that John had not called the Vatican Council in the first place) and progressives (who wished that Paul had been less cautious in carrying out its dictates). He set up a kingmaker—Cardinal Benelli, the *sostituto*, or Vatican undersecretary of state—and then showed how rivalry, the kingmaker’s plotting, and the work of the *grande elettore*, the Holy Spirit, tipped the vote to Albino Luciani of Venice, who chose the name John Paul.

Luciani’s death a month later exposed as cliché much of what had been written about his election. Was it really credible to say that the *grande elettore* had “chosen” a man who was on the verge of a fatal heart attack? The cardinals and the press returned to Rome, and after a rain-soaked funeral in Saint Peter’s Square (“more than one journalist permitted himself to say that ‘even the heavens wept,’” Hebblethwaite remarked) the cardinal electors entered the Sistine Chapel again.

The story of how they chose a Polish Pope has been told countless times since, but Hebblethwaite, writing on deadline, judged the situation right. The progressive Italian candidates who had trailed Luciani were deemed “*bruciati*, spent forces.” A reactionary front-runner, Giuseppe Siri of

Genoa, sabotaged his candidacy by speaking recklessly in a newspaper interview that hit the stands just before the electors went into conclave. A kingmaker emerged in Franz König of Vienna, who sought a non-Italian Pope and a Vatican II Pope; he found allies in Joseph Ratzinger of Munich and John Krol of Philadelphia, and together they championed Karol Wojtyła of Kraków. The Pole's summer sojourn in North America had had great consequences after all.

Thus was elected the most surprising of recent Popes. But the real surprise, as one realizes reading Hebblethwaite's account a quarter of a century later, lay in the direction that John Paul's pontificate took. For at first John Paul II was thought to be ... a liberal! The emphasis he had given at Vatican II to the notion of the "People of God" was interpreted as a sign of his wish to favor the laity over the clergy. His support for labor agitators in Poland was thought to extend to revolutionaries in Latin America. His stated wish for "full communion" between Catholicism and the "separated" churches was seen as readiness to meet the Anglicans and the Orthodox halfway.

When it comes to characterizing the Church's leadership, even the experts are amateurs. It is hard not to conclude that they are asking the wrong questions, following a script written by twenty centuries of precedent.

Why has this pontificate gone so unexpectedly? It may be that experts were stuck on brittle formulations—a Pope for the council or against it; a "pilgrim Pope" or a "prisoner of the Vatican"; a Pope from Italy or one from "a far country"—and so could not see Wojtyła for the distinctive character he was. It may be that the Iron Curtain hid Polish Catholics' view of their country as the last redoubt of Catholic Europe. It may be that John Paul changed course somewhat after he had surveyed the Catholic world from Peter's throne, and that the credit he got for bringing down the Iron Curtain emboldened him to act magisterially rather than collegially.

Could anyone outside the Vatican have foreseen that Karol Wojtyła would be elected Pope? Could anyone even inside the Vatican have foreseen the direction his pontificate would take—the 100-plus foreign trips; the plethora of canonizations; the opening to Judaism and the rebuff to Anglicanism; the challenge to communism in Poland and then throughout the Eastern bloc; the apology to Galileo; the photo op with Castro; the abrupt declarations that matters of ordination and sexuality, which had only just begun to receive informed attention from the world's Catholics, were closed to further discussion? The answer, of course, is

no. Even so, the spectacular misreading of John Paul shows the perils of interpreting any Pope in terms of his curriculum vitae.

Perhaps with the surprises of John Paul in mind, Hebblethwaite wrote *The Next Pope*. Having created the mold for conclave reporting, with this book (published a decade ago), he created the mold for the current conclave books: a catchy title, a jacket showing some cardinals looking at once contemplative and mysterious, a promise of a "behind-the-scenes look" at the process, and thumbnail character sketches of the *papabili*. Though it is sprinkled with vivid details and anecdotes, *The Next Pope* is in spirit a polemic against what Hebblethwaite (who died shortly after completing it) saw as the interminable misrule of John Paul II. It is as if he, like an aging cardinal, knew that he would not see the next conclave and so decided to cast his vote in print—hoping for "a chance for the Church to make a fresh start."

His survey of the *papabili*, however, suggests that the fresh start he envisioned is unlikely. His and everyone else's favorite Italian progressive, Carlo Maria Martini of Milan, is now seventy-six and thus an unlikely choice, as is the charming moderate Marco Cé of Venice, now seventy-nine. He dismisses the other Italians as reactionaries of one kind or another. Angelo Sodano, the secretary of state, is "an embarrassment: 'a gray man with gray ideas.'" Giacomo Biffi of Bologna is a "depressing" champion of Opus Dei and other traditionalist movements. Dionigi Tettamanzi of Genoa is as dull as his name—which means "bull's tits"—is colorful. Camillo Ruini, the vicar of Rome, "is seen as ruthless, cold, and controlling" and "is likely to be a kingmaker, rather than a candidate."

Among the attractive European candidates, Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris, a Jewish convert, is today too old, and Godfried Danneels of Belgium too awkward socially. The tolerable Americans—Roger Mahony of Los Angeles and William Keeler of Baltimore—suffer the drawback of being American in a world seen as riven and even dominated by the world's only superpower. That leaves the prospect of an "international" candidate. Hebblethwaite had a warm feeling for the Church in Latin America, but he saw all the present cardinals there as agents of a Vatican crackdown on progressive vitality. "Ambitious and unscrupulous" Alfonso López Trujillo of Colombia was closely associated with a Belgian Jesuit who "had more contacts with the CIA than with the Society of Jesus"; his countryman Dario Castrillón Hoyos (deemed a *papabile* by the novelist Gabriel García Márquez) was "mind-blowingly conservative." Among the rest of the world's candidates—everyone from Jaime Sin of Manila to Stephen Hamao of Japan—Hebblethwaite lavished the most attention on Francis Arinze of Nigeria: a black man and a convert from animism, who was the head of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (he now heads the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments). Hebblethwaite reported that

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Arinze “sat on the papal chair during the final Mass of the Synod for Africa, when John Paul was taken to hospital with a broken femur—perhaps a sign of things to come?” A journalist to the end, he seemed to know that—as has proved the case—the press and the public alike would relish the prospect of a black Pope.

Every Friday the *National Catholic Reporter* posts a column called “The Word From Rome” on its Web site (www.natcath.org), alongside a photograph of its author, John L. Allen Jr., whose smile and neatly trimmed black beard make him look more like a Franciscan friar than a reporter. “The Word From Rome” is Allen’s running chronicle of public life in the Vatican. Long, chatty, written with offhand ease, it effectively puts the reader in “this 108-acre island of ecclesiastical life in the heart of modern urban Rome”—a place, it seems, where liturgies and prayers are greatly outnumbered by conferences, lectures, state visits, and the like. In one column earlier this year Allen reported on a symposium at which scholars reappraised the work of the late theologian Karl Rahner; passed along “talk of a ‘feminist turn’ in Vatican personnel policy” prompted by the appointment of the Harvard law professor Mary Ann Glendon as president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences; and apologized to Archbishop O’Brien of Edinburgh for attributing to him, rather than to his late colleague Cardinal Winning of Glasgow, the oft quoted characterization of Cardinal Tettamanzi as a “wee fat guy.”

The emergence of Allen, who is thirty-nine years old, as “one of the most influential men in Rome” (as he was called in a recent *Newsweek* article by Kenneth Woodward and Robert Blair Kaiser, two old Vatican hands) is perhaps the most unlikely development yet in the run-up to the next conclave. In 1997 Allen was teaching religion at Notre Dame High School in Los Angeles; in 1999 the *National Catholic Reporter* sent him to Europe on a six-week assignment and then made him its Vatican correspondent; by last year he had become an expert commentator for National Public Radio, PBS, CNN, *The Boston Globe*, and European television. Allen is the reporter who spotted Cardinal Bernard Law out to dinner in Rome with a senior secretary to the Pope at the low point of the clerical sexual-abuse scandals in Boston—and the scoop was the first clear sign that the crisis might lead to Law’s resignation.

Allen is a dogged reporter but not, as a rule, a controversial or investigative one; he brings a graduate student’s enthusiasm to the subject of how the Vatican operates. Upon the death, in March, of Franz König, the kingmaker who engineered Karol Wojtyła’s election, Allen recalled an afternoon he spent, starstruck, in the ancient prelate’s company. Upon John Paul’s eighty-fourth birthday, in May, Allen ingeniously “attempted to quantify the pope’s decline by comparing his official schedule from 25 years ago, as released by the Vatican Press Office, with his program

today.” His “bottom line” was that “the John Paul of today is roughly 40 percent less active in Rome than he was ... and 75 percent less active during his trips abroad.”

What does Allen himself think about the man and the institution he covers? It is often hard to tell by reading “The Word From Rome.” In this the column is distinctly different from the *National Catholic Reporter* as a whole, which as a rule takes a strident, adversarial approach to the “institutional Church” in general and the residents of its Roman headquarters in particular. The Vatican and *NCR* are about as dissimilar as Catholic institutions can be. Rather than untangling the paradox of his role, however, Allen has pitched his tent within it, speaking to both sides from some unchartable spot in the middle.

Naturally, Allen is often asked who the next Pope will be, and the question hovers over his two recent books: *Conclave*, published in 2002, and *All the Pope’s Men*, published earlier this year. He deftly delivers plenty of little-known information about recent Popes, and at the end of *Conclave* he gives his own “top twenty list” of front-runners for the papacy. His capsule biographies reveal that these men, assumed to be as one in matters of doctrine, are quite diverse in experience. Miloslav Vlk of the Czech Republic once worked as a window washer. Lubomyr Husar of Ukraine is a U.S. citizen who returned to his native land in adulthood. Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga of Honduras is a champion of debt relief. Tettamanzi lined up alongside “the people of Seattle” at protest rallies during the G-8 summit in Genoa in 2001. For every man whose views are more provocative than one might wish (such as Arinze, who declared that his reaction upon seeing gay men in the streets of Rome was a desire to “wash their heads with holy water”) there is one who, like Walter Kasper the “friendly cardinal” from Germany, is unexpectedly appealing. Although *Conclave* is as good a book on the subject as we are likely to get, it doesn’t leave a distinct impression of actual men. Allen’s *papabili* are careers in human form, résumés with arms and legs. As for *All the Pope’s Men*, his attempt to solve this problem, it delivers everything one could ask for in a book about the Vatican’s inner workings except the human portraiture the title promises.

Allen will be CNN’s onscreen analyst during the next conclave. The prospect that this gifted and relatively young writer will be lost, Stephanopoulos-like, to the limbo of expert commentary is disheartening. It suggests that in the development of Vatican reporting from Rynne to Hebblethwaite to Allen—from a priest to a former priest to a reporter who looks like a priest—the triumph of process over character is complete, and the appraisal of human strengths and weaknesses has been replaced by the analysis of organizational behavior. If this is so, it is no surprise. Something like it has happened in American Catholic intellectual life generally, among progressives and traditionalists alike.

Fortunately, Allen already seems to be growing out of

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the role set aside for him. As he has gone from novice to *wunderkind* to sage, he has begun to address the next pontificate more emphatically. In a talk at the Catholic Press Association's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in May he sketched scenarios for "four prospective pontificates," and in them offered searching characterizations of four men's visions for the papacy. Joseph Ratzinger, he explained, would run the papacy like a border patrol, policing the Church the way he has as prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome—but he would do so in order to seek "a smaller but more unified Church, a 'mustard seed,' one whose reduced size produces a more intense fidelity." Danneels of Belgium would make the papacy the locus of reform and collegiality, because he believes that "a more engaged and optimistic church, using the language of beauty rather than condemnation, is the right dialogue partner for the Western world." Angelo Scola, the patriarch of Venice, would shape an "integralist" papacy, devoted to "the urgent work of fostering distinctively Christian cultural

In the matter of faith John Paul's legacy to the next Pope is clear. More than at any other time in the modern history of the papacy, the Pope is recognized worldwide as an authentic religious figure.

proposals"—which "would mean a more scrappy, confrontational Catholic church, closer to what Americans have come to call 'the religious right,' though with a more solid intellectual underpinning." Cláudio Hummes of Brazil would act as an agent of social justice, "addressing the structural inequalities in the world that condemn millions of God's people to poverty, disease, and civil unrest," and would urge his pastors to see "the struggle for human dignity" on behalf of the poor as "itself a form of evangelization." Addressed to a religious audience, these sketches sparkle with insight. In them the *papabili* are men with hearts and souls, who stand for four distinct ways to be Catholic in twenty-first-century society. In them these religious leaders actually seem religious.

The Pope is the Bishop of Rome, the Patriarch of the West, the Vicar of Christ, the Servant of the Servants of God. So freighted with import are these titles that it is easy to forget that the Pope is first and foremost a believing Christian, and that he is nothing else—nothing authentic, at least—if his beliefs are not believable.

On this point John Paul's legacy to the next Pope is clear. More than at any other time in the modern history of the

papacy, the Pope is recognized worldwide as an authentic religious figure. All but his fiercest critics would concede that John Paul is not the Antichrist, not an agent of political reaction, but a true believer who sees it as his mission to ensure that when the Son of Man comes, he will find faith on earth. To those who think that a Pope's claim to a special role among Christians is ridiculous, John Paul has put forward his life and self as a rejoinder. It is possible to believe that he has drawn some wrong conclusions from Catholicism's premises—to wish that his pontificate had brought a different set of surprises—and yet at the same time be prompted to a more authentic faith by his example, the witness of a person who is obviously worthy of the office he occupies.

Where the experts expected the papal role to diminish, John Paul has surprised them, strengthening the papacy by taking it to the people. This is a development that ought to have been foreseen, because it was implicit in the pontificates that preceded his. John XXIII, through the Second Vatican Council, put forward the image of the Church as a body of believers on a pilgrimage in time, rather than an institution standing above and outside history. Paul VI, "the pilgrim Pope," made the metaphor literal, rooting it in the foreign soil he kissed. And John Paul has made his entire pontificate a pilgrimage—one full of implications for the pilgrimage of the ordinary believer. Through his trips he has made clear that the whole world—not just a certain 108 acres within Rome—is pilgrim territory. In recent years, by carrying on in public even though he is physically diminished, he has acted out the central Christian belief that it is in suffering embraced in faith that redemption is to be sought.

Now all the world knows what kind of believer Karol Wojtyla is; and the cardinals who will elect his successor doubtless know it especially well. Like him, they are religious people; and for all their human failings, it seems reasonable to suppose that when the time comes to choose the next Pope, they will strive to put first things first. In choosing John Paul's successor, then, surely they will seek no less a man of faith than he. Age, nationality, languages, achievements, the demographic prospects for the Church in the new century: all these will be important considerations, and will be grist for the media. So will the questions of whether the papacy is to pass from Europe (now seen as a pagan place that needs to be converted all over again) and whether the Italian cardinals or the German ones will hold sway in the conclave.

But the cardinal electors, with the next Pope sitting among them, and with (they believe) the *grande elettore* presiding, will ask first of all how authentic the faith of that man of faith is—how high his hopes, how deep his depths. They will ponder his character, mindful that John Paul's character has shaped the Church worldwide for a quarter of a century. They will ask, What kind of believer is he? And, a little later, so will we. ▀

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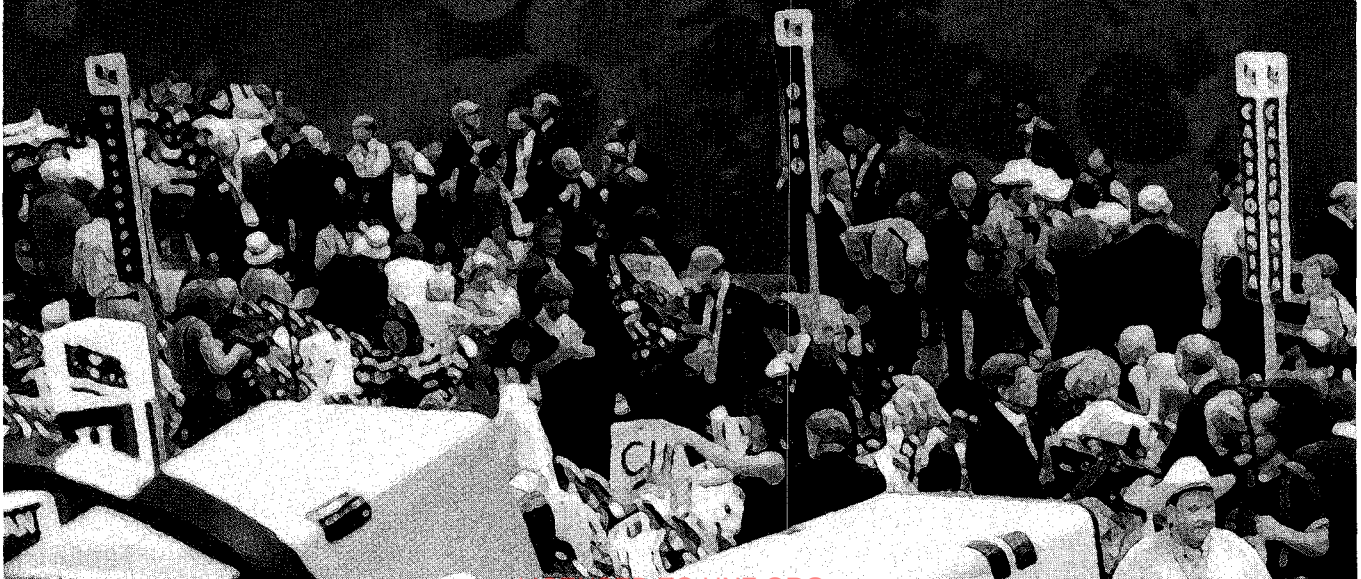
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MORE NIXON TAPES

A selection from recordings in the National Archives

BY JAMES WARREN

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This summer marks the thirtieth anniversary of President Richard M. Nixon's resignation. In 1974 the Watergate investigation had been under way for more than two years, during which time Nixon had denied any wrongdoing. His claims unraveled, of course—in part because of conversations he himself had tape-recorded.

Nixon left behind some 3,800 hours of taped conversations in all, dealing with virtually every aspect of his presidency. In February of 1971 he had begun installing what was to become an extensive recording system in multiple locations. The only people with knowledge of the system were H. R. Haldeman, Nixon's chief of staff; Alexander Butterfield, one of Haldeman's aides (Butterfield later disclosed the existence of the tapes to Watergate investigators); and a handful of Secret Service technicians. Nixon shut the system down in July of 1973, as the Watergate investigation gathered force.

The National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland, has been gradually releasing the Nixon tapes since 1996. Some 2,019 hours have been made available to date. The recordings provide a window onto a highly complicated man: deeply insecure, venal and petty and given to racial and ethnic slurs, but also sophisticated in his understanding of domestic and foreign affairs (and of the often frustrating ways of the giant bureaucracy under his command). I have listened to Nixon tapes as each batch has been released, creating transcripts of conversations that are frequently elliptical and sometimes difficult to hear. Following are excerpts from recordings made in 1971 and 1972.

A MASTER OF INGRATIATION

Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, April 7, 1971

Nixon had just delivered a televised address on Operation Lam Son 719, in Laos, an invasion planned by the United States but carried out largely by the South Vietnamese army, and intended in part to show that the South Vietnamese could undertake offensive operations successfully—that the policy of “Vietnamization” was working. Displeased with the reaction in Congress and even in his Cabinet, Nixon telephoned Henry Kissinger, his National Security Adviser, clearly seeking reassurance. Kissinger was in deep flatter-the-king mode.

James Warren is a deputy managing editor at the Chicago Tribune and was formerly the paper's Washington bureau chief.

RN: How did it come off in delivery? I didn't look up much.

HK: It was by far the best delivery I've heard you give. It was dignified, strong, it was not ingratiating. If anything can do it—I don't know what the results will be, Mr. President.

RN: Ah, well, we won't ... those leaders were a miserable lot, weren't they?

HK: Well, [House Speaker Carl B.] Albert is all right, but—

RN: [Senator Hugh] Scott didn't—I mean Scott—[Representative Gerald R.] Ford's fine, but that goddamn Scott—was—and [Senator Robert P.] Griffin suckin' around.

HK: Well, Scott. Anything you tell Scott you might as well tell *The New York Times*.

RN: But I was, ah, after you left, I stuck it to 'em. I said, Look, you know, on that point—I said if Congress wants to take over, that's fine, but then they take the responsibility for this going down the drain and that is clear, gentlemen. By God, I'm not going to let them get off this hook.

HK: Well, it is a disgrace, Mr. President. You are saving this country. It is—

RN: Well, incidentally, let me say, screw the Cabinet and the rest of those. As far as I'm concerned, I've made the speech now and the rest of them—if they like it, fine. But no more suckin' around. From now on they come to me. I'm sick of the whole bunch.

HK: Well, you gave a speech that we—that you can—that we can all be proud to have had the privilege to be associated with.

RN: Well, I'm glad you feel that way.

HK: It is—it was also magnificently delivered. It was the best delivery—

RN: Well, it was a goddamn good little speech, actually.

HK: Deep down they all know you're right. That's the end of it.

RN: And the others are a bunch of goddamn cowards, and they—

HK: Cowards and publicity seekers.

RN: That's right. I'll tell you this, though, Henry. You've convinced me the staff, except for Haldeman and one or two others—

HK: [John D.] Ehrlichman has been—

RN: Haldeman, Ehrlichman. Well, [OMB director George] Shultz is fine, but he's in another league. But the staff, generally, screw 'em, and, ah, they can do their jobs, but ... and as far as the Cabinet, except for [Treasury Secretary

John] Connally, to hell with them. That's all there is to it.

HK: Well, Mr. President, you've done this one—

RN: And if it doesn't work, I don't care. Right now, if it doesn't work—then let me say, though, that I'm going to find out soon and I'm gonna turn right so goddamn hard, it will make your head spin. We'll bomb those bastards right out, off the earth. I really mean it.

OH, THOSE IRISH!

Richard Nixon and William Rogers, February 2, 1972

The preceding month had been an extraordinarily violent one in Northern Ireland: twenty-five people had been killed in civil unrest, including thirteen who were shot by British troops during a demonstration in Londonderry on January 30—the so-called Bloody Sunday. On February 2 a crowd of about 25,000 burned down the British embassy in Dublin. Nixon and his Secretary of State, William Rogers, spoke by phone later that day about the political conundrum these events posed for the United States.

RN: Hello, Bill.

WR: Hi, Mr. President.

RN: You went to another reception, eh?

WR: Oh, yes, International Club.

RN: What about the Irish?

WR: Well, the Foreign Minister is coming to see me in the morning.

RN: Foreign Minister of Ireland?

WR: Ireland, yeah. The British ambassador was in this afternoon. And it's gonna become a very important political issue here at home.

RN: Yes.

WR: [Senator Edward] Kennedy's trying to make a lot of it.

RN: I know.

WR: And I wanted to get your guidance on what I should say. My own judgment is that I should say something that was really expressing our concern and, ah, indicate we hope that discussions will be held. He knows our concern to see that something can be worked out. Now, I talked to Cromer [George R.S. Baring, the Earl of Cromer, who was Britain's ambassador to the United States] about it today and said we didn't want to say anything unless it was agreeable with them. But I think that from your standpoint you should, because the, ah, Jim Buckley [a senator from New York]—

RN: And all the Irish—

WR: Kennedy, and all the others, are making a lot of it. And even though it's a little embarrassing with the British, I think that—

RN: What did Cromer say? Did he—

WR: Well, he said he understood, and I told him I'd get in touch with him in the morning. But did you say anything to [British Prime Minister Edward] Heath on this subject? Do you remember?

RN: No. Oh, yes! We—of course, it hadn't escalated at that point. And I said, look, that—I said, in effect, this—the agony of Ireland and England—is something we don't want to exacerbate. That we just hope that we won't say anything that's gonna make it more difficult for you, but we hope you can work it out. I just sort of left it that way.

I don't want to be in the—I don't think we should be in the position of demagoguing it ...

WR: Right. I got a letter, a telegram, from [British Foreign Secretary] Sir Alec Home today.

RN: What's he say?

WR: Well, he was presenting a point of view. And, ah, he didn't—he hoped that we wouldn't take sides. And we can't take sides ...

RN: Of course, you know it is a terrible tragedy, because the British, with all of their great points, always mishandled Ireland.

WR: Yeah.

RN: And I don't know whether they're mishandling it now or not. But they probably aren't. But the point is, the historical record is so bad that they now just can't look good, anything they do.

WR: Really a terrible dilemma.

RN: Isn't it, though? 'Cause you know, and let's face it, the Irish are—these people, the Irish, are pretty goddamn bad here. They're the Kennedy type, out raising hell, blowing up the place, burning down the embassy and all that.

THE REVOLTING IVY LEAGUE

Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, April 18, 1972

During a conversation at Camp David, Nixon and Kissinger discussed developments in Vietnam. Two weeks earlier, with the Paris peace talks stalled, the North had resumed military incursions into the South. Nixon, in turn, had ordered intensified bombing of the North. Kissinger informed the President of a meeting he had attended the previous day with the presidents of the Ivy League schools, who were preparing a statement denouncing the bombing.

HK: I had the Ivy League presidents in yesterday. They asked to see me.

RN: Holy shit. Sons of bitches—I wouldn't have seen them. They don't deserve it. They don't deserve it. I'll tell you this, they are never—I'm surprised that we really have—who did this? Haldeman told you to have them in?

HK: They called him for a meeting with you.

RN: The Ivy League presidents? Oh, I won't let those sons of bitches ever in this White House again. Never. Never. None of them. They're finished. The Ivy League schools are finished. My God—

HK: I spent an hour with them, and it was revolting, because they have now embraced the program of the radicals. They said, in effect, they want us to cut off economic and military aid—

RN: And what happens?

HK: They said, have a Communist government in power in Saigon. I said, Have you considered that? I'm amazed that leaders of educational institutions should take such a position on a moral issue. The president of Harvard said, Look, there are a lot of immoral things happening in the world which we don't resist.

RN: So, Henry, look, I would not have had them in. So don't ever do that again. Don't ever have them in. They came out against us when it was tough. Don't ever have them in again. And when they [unintelligible]. Don't ever go to an Ivy League school again. Ever. Never, never, never.



CORBIS

DOWN WITH MAYO

Richard Nixon and Tricia Nixon, April 18, 1972

In February of 1972 Nixon opened U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China. That spring his daughter Tricia accompanied a Chinese table-tennis team on a tour of the United States. Arriving at the University of Maryland in College Park for an exhibition tournament, the group encountered both Vietnam War protesters and supporters of the Taiwanese leader, Chiang Kai-shek, who were furious about the rapprochement with mainland China.

RN: Hello.

TN: Hello, Daddy, it's me.

RN: Hi, Trish. How did it go last night?

TN: Oh, did you hear?

RN: Bill Rogers told me he saw you there. He said there were a few demonstrators around but he says it went all right. How'd you feel?

TN: Oh, he thought it went all right?! That's interesting. Well, he called this morning. There were quite a few demonstrators, because it was held at the University of Maryland.

RN: Well, they were demonstrating on all sides, though, some of them Chinese—

TN: The national Chinese were out, and they were shouting, "Down with Mao" [pronounced *Mayo*], and then the other people were shouting, "Ho Chi Minh."

RN: Ho Chi Minh.

TN: But we were very loudly booed when we walked in.

RN: You were?

TN: Very loudly, yeah.

RN: You and who? You and Rogers?

TN: And Rogers, yuh.

RN: You think you should not have gone?

TN: Yeah, I think it was a bad one to do. It was a good idea, but we shouldn't have gone to the University of Maryland ... It was the motliest crew you've ever seen.

RN: Well, that's my view about going to the universities. Well, I hope it didn't bother you too much.

TN: No, it didn't. It was just—I know, I was just embarrassed because the Chinese issued a complaint.

RN: A complaint about what?

TN: Oh, you know, that they were being rude to the chairman—they were insulting Chairman Mao. There was nothing we could do! It's a free country!

RN: Did they boo the Chinese, too?

TN: No, they didn't boo the Chinese, 'cause—uh, no, they didn't.

RN: But did they announce you and the Secretary when you went in?

TN: Yeah, first they announced me, and there were loud boos. Oh, it was incredible. Of course, our people aren't very vociferous, so it just sounded much louder. And that's what was carried on the news.

RN: And, then, ah, carried on the news?

TN: And of course they didn't even say that later rocks had been—there was rock-throwing by these people, and—

RN: Was there? Who'd they throw at?

TN: The authorities. A number were arrested.

RN: And then did they introduce Rogers? They boo him, too?

TN: Yeah, they booed him, too. And then they had chants. There was a chant about me. But they didn't really take on Rogers. So, that was good ...

OIL TANKS VS. CIVILIANS

Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, May 5, 1972

It was during this conversation that Nixon arrived at the decision to blockade and mine the North Vietnamese harbor of Haiphong.

RN: The United States of America, at this point, cannot have a viable foreign policy if we are humiliated in Vietnam. We must not lose in Vietnam. It's as cold as that. Right?

HK: I agree.

RN: And they have not given us any way to avoid being humiliated. And since they have not, we must draw the sword, so the blockade is on. And I must say that I, I—and incidentally, I want one thing understood—you say bombing. Moorer [Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] is right, the surgical-operations theory is all right. But I want that place, whenever the planes are available, bombed to smithereens during the blockade. If we draw the sword on 'em, we're gonna bomb those bastards all over the place.

HK: No question.

RN: And let it fly, let it fly.

HK: The only point I disagree—we can do all of this without killing too many civilians. I just know we can.

RN: I don't want to kill civilians, you know that. I don't *try* to kill any. But, goddamn it, don't be so careful that you don't knock out the oil tanks.

HK: God, no.

RN: See my point?

RINGING OFF THE HOOK

Richard Nixon and Charles "Bebe" Rebozo, May 9, 1972

Rebozo, one of Nixon's oldest friends, called Nixon to congratulate him on a televised speech he had given the night before,

announcing the blockading and mining of Haiphong Harbor and reporting on his current peace proposal.

RN: Well, you know their question now is whether it works.

BR: Well—

RN: It will work over a period of time and, ah, 'cause I intend to squeeze these bastards if it takes a year.

BR: Exactly. Well, I guess they've had three days to bring everything they want in, haven't they?

RN: Ah, no, no, hell, no. Boy, if they start bringing it in, then the ships are stuck, so nobody's going to go in.

BR: It's just obvious—

RN: Yeah, twenty ships are lined up to get out right now—they've clogged the channel, there's no way they can get in.

[Rebozo laughs.]

RN: Hell, no. And we're gonna bomb the railroad yards tonight.

BR: Beautiful. Beautiful.

RN: And so—

BR: I'll tell you, they just didn't dream that you would do this in an election year, see.

RN: Yup. Well, it'll—of course, probably, as they've already said, most people think it will sink the Russian summit [a U.S.-Soviet arms-control meeting was scheduled for late May]. But I don't—

BR: I don't—

RN: But if it does, what the hell?

BR: I don't think it will. I think they're gonna want it all the more.

RN: Ah, I don't know.

BR: You didn't say a thing about China. I tell you, it was just a magnificent thing. I've never had such a reaction on any of them. Never. My phone was just ringing off the hook from people who don't normally call. They might express themselves later. But it was just a phenomenal thing. And the reaction is just, ah—

RN: Were the calls all male?

[Rebozo snickers. Nixon chortles a little.]

BR: I told Bob—

RN: Abplanalp [a wealthy Republican businessman]?

BR: No, I told Bob Haldeman, last night one woman called, and I didn't know whether she was drunk or just emotional, crying, and I don't know who she was! And I didn't want to ask her! And how she got my home number, I don't know—it's unlisted.

RN [cackling]: She probably got it off the wall of some toilet!

[Both laugh.]

OH, THOSE AFRICANS!

*Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, September 24, 1972
At Camp David, Nixon and Kissinger discussed events in Africa: Uganda's President Idi Amin had recently ordered the expulsion of Asians with British passports. (He later expanded the order to include Asians of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi descent.) Great Britain, which had cut off economic aid to Uganda, was concerned about the safety of its remaining citizens there.*

HK: Hello, Mr. President.

RN: Hi, Henry [clearing throat], how are ya?

HK: I am fine. Sorry to disturb you.

RN: No, that's all right. Fine, fine.

HK: We have a problem in Uganda.

RN: Yeah.

HK: And the problem is this: the British are very worried that there may be a massacre of their seven thousand, ah—

RN: British.

HK: British they've got there, and they're scattered all over the country.

RN: Of course.

HK: And they'd like to have some secret talks with us about some logistics help.

RN: Sure—well, then, have them.

HK: They tried it earlier this week, and State has turned them down repeatedly.

RN: Screw State! State's always on the side of the blacks. The hell with them.

HK: I knew this would be your reaction!

RN: I just can't understand why we haven't had them before. You know, like that thing on Burundi [that spring and summer more than 100,000 Hutus were killed after an uprising against the Tutsi government]. I want State's ass reamed out on that for not, for not—Henry, ah, in the whole Burundi business—I've been watching it in the press—did you know that State has not sent one memorandum over to us on it?

HK: Absolutely!

RN: Or have they? Or have you had something I haven't seen?

HK: No, no, they have not.

RN: Well, how do you feel about it? Don't you really feel—just be, let's be totally honest, isn't a person a person, goddamn it? ... You know, there are those, you know, they talk about Vietnam, about these people far away that we don't know, and you remember that poor old Chamberlain [Neville Chamberlain, Britain's Prime Minister from 1937 to 1940] talks about the Czechs, that they were far away and we don't know them very well. Well, now, goddamn it, people are people in my opinion.

HK: Well, it's not only that—

RN: I don't mean our national interest gets involved. But every time, every time, that anybody else gets involved—every time it's one other individual or us and you have a little pressure group here—State goes up the wall. But I'm getting tired of this business of letting these Africans eat a hundred thousand people and do nothing about it.

HK: And when they have—and all these bleeding hearts in this country, who say we like to kill yellow people.

RN: That's right.

HK: There haven't been as many killed in eight years of the war as were killed in three months in Burundi ...

RN: Isn't it awful, though, what these, this goddamn guy—the head of Uganda, Henry—is an ape!

HK: He's an ape without education.

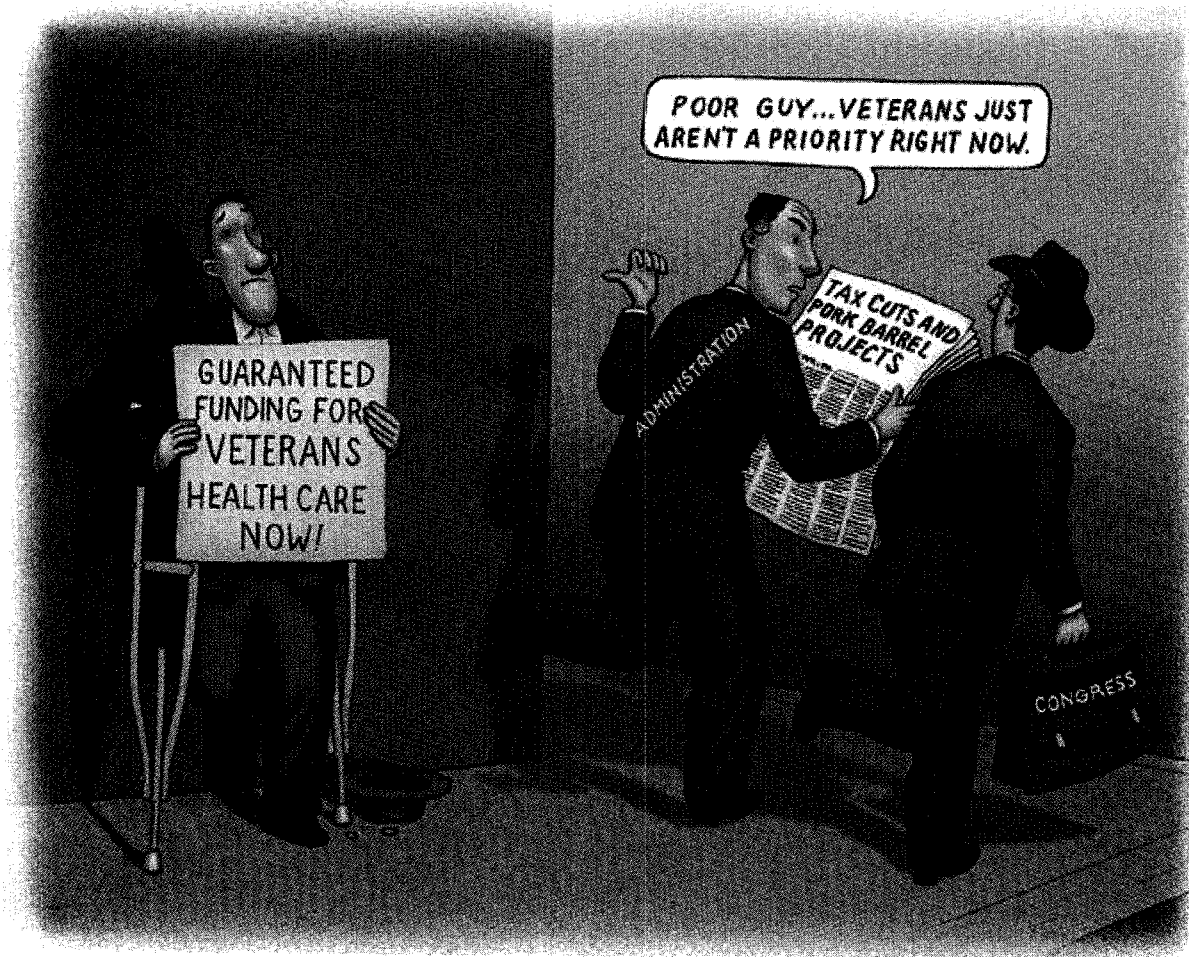
RN: That's probably no disadvantage. I mean—

[Kissinger laughs heartily.]

RN: You figure that asshole that was the head of Ghana had a brilliant education in the United States. Then, I mean, so let's face it—

HK [laughing]: That's right.

RN: No, no, what I mean is, he really is, he's a prehistoric monster. But the same with Burundi. ▀



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FLORENCE OF ARABIA

How one woman (plus a disgraced Green Beret, a shameless PR lackey, and the wife of a sheikh) brought the Middle East to the brink of female emancipation. A short story

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Illustration by Paul Cox

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The official residence of His Excellency Prince Bawad bin-Rumallah al-Hamooj, ambassador of the Royal Kingdom of Wasabia to the United States of America, perches expensively on \$18 million worth of real estate overlooking a frothy rapid of the Potomac River a few miles upstream from Washington, D.C. The front gate of the compound displays in bright gold leaf the emblem of the Royal House of Hamooj: a date palm, a crescent moon, and a scimitar hovering over a head. The head does not bear a pleased expression, owing to its having been decapitated by the scimitar.

Historically speaking, the head belonged to one Rafiq "The Unwise" al-Sawah, who one night in 1740 or 1742 (historians differ on the precise date) attempted to usurp the authority of Sheikh Abdulabdullah "The Wise" Waffa al-Hamooj, founder of the Wasabi dynasty and a future king. According to legend (now taught as historical fact in the country's schools), Rafiq's severed head attempted to apologize to the sheikh for its perfidy, and begged to be reattached. Sheikh Abdulabdullah, however, was in no mood to hear these entreaties. Had he not treated Rafiq like his own brother? He ordered the still blubbing mouth to be stuffed with camel dung and the head tossed to the desert hyenas.

The event is commemorated every year on the anniversary of the Perfidy of Rafiq. Adult male citizens of the kingdom are required to place a token amount of camel dung on their tongues, as a symbol of the king's authority and a reminder of the bitter fate that befalls those who attempt to undermine it. Only Hamooji palace staff and the most conservative of Wasabis re-enact the ritual literally, however. A hundred years ago an enterprising confectioner in the capital city of Kaffa devised a nougat that gave off the aroma of the original article—enough to fool the *mukfelleen*, the religious police who enforce the precepts of the Book of Hamooj. Wasabis could pop one onto the tongue and walk about all day with a showy air of piety. Alas, the trickery was

discovered, and the unfortunate candymaker forfeited not only his license to manufacture sweets but also his tongue, right hand, and left foot. On assuming the throne, in 1974, King Tallulah decreed that a "symbolic" piece of dung would suffice. This caused much grumbling among the mullahs and *mukfelleen*, but vast relief among the adult male population.

A few minutes past midnight on a crisp September night the gates on which the royal emblem was mounted swung open and let out a car driven by Nasrah al-Bawad, wife of Prince Bawad.

Nasrah's exit would doubtless have been smoother had she spent more time behind the wheel of an automobile, but Wasabi women are not permitted to drive. However, being enterprising and spirited, Nasrah had since adolescence been begging various males, starting with her brother Tamsa, to teach her the mysteries of steering, brake, and gas. Taking the wheel of their father's Cadillac in the open deserts of Wasabia was not so complicated. In Washington she would importune (that is, bribe) the reluctant Khalil, her chauffeur-bodyguard-minder, to let her drive on certain half-deserted streets and in the parking lots of such royal hangouts as Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue. She had progressed to the point of almost being able to parallel park without leaving most of the paint on the fenders of the cars in front and behind. Khalil had in the process earned a reputation within the household as a driver of less than perfect reliability.

Tonight Nasrah found herself maneuvering with difficulty. Exiting the gate, she sheared off the rearview mirror and left a scrape down the side of the \$85,000 car that would cause the most stoic of insurance adjusters to weep. Her intention had been to turn left, toward Washington. But seeing the

headlights of a car coming up the country lane from that direction, she panicked and turned right, deeper into the deciduous suburb of McLean.

In truth, Nasrah was not thinking clearly. In truth, she was drunk.

After many years in Washington her husband

Christopher Buckley is the author of ten previous books. This story is the first of two drawn from his novel Florence of Arabia, to be published in September by Random House.



the prince had announced his intention of returning to Wasabia, along with Nasrah and his three other wives. His uncle, the king, had decided to reward his decades of service by anointing him Foreign Minister. This was a big promotion that came with an even bigger palace and a share of Wasabia's oil royalties.

The news was less than joyous to Nasrah, the youngest, prettiest, and most independent-minded of the prince's wives. She did not want to return to Wasabia. Her years of living in America—even under the watchful eye of Shazzik, Prince Bawad's stern, neutered (or so it was rumored) chamberlain—had left her with an appreciation of the role of women in Western society. She was in no hurry to return to a country where she would have to hide her lovely features under a veil, and in even less of a hurry to return to a country where women were still being publicly flogged, stoned to death, and having their heads cut off in a place in the capital city so accustomed to the spectacle that it had earned the nickname "Chop Chop Square."

Nasrah had been planning to inform the prince of her decision to remain in the United States that night, after he returned from his dinner with the Waldorf Group—a very influential group indeed, consisting of ex-U.S. Presidents, ex-Secretaries of State and Defense, ex-directors of the Central Intelligence Agency—excellent folks all, and what contacts they had! Since its founding, ten years earlier, the Waldorf Group had invested more than \$5 billion of Wasabi royal money in various projects. This made for close relationships all around. Many members of the Group's board also sat on the boards of the companies in which the royal money was invested.

Tonight's meeting concerned a desalination project. Desalination is always a hot topic in Wasabia, owing to the country's geographical peculiarity: it is entirely landlocked and even lacks access to rivers. This unhappy circumstance is a grating historical vestige, the result of a moment of bibulous pique on the part of Winston Churchill, who drew up Wasabia's modern borders on a cocktail napkin at his club in London. King Hamir had been uncooperative during the peace conference, and so, with a few strokes of his fountain pen, Churchill denied him fresh water and seaports. Thus do brief, brandy-saturated moments determine the fate of empires and the course of history.

Back at the residence, Nasrah took a nip from the prince's bottle of 150-year-old Napoleon. When at eleven o'clock he had still not returned, she took another nip. Then another. By the time the prince finally did arrive, at 11:40, she was feeling no pain.

The speech that she had so carefully rehearsed tumbled off her benumbed tongue without eloquence or coherence, and heavily redolent of brandy. The prince, moonfaced, goateed, and imperious, brusquely ordered Nasrah to her room.

A late-night argument between an indulged royal prince

and a tipsy junior wife is not an occasion for ideal dialogue. It deteriorated quickly into shouts and terminated with the prince's dealing Nasrah a cuff across the chops with a meaty, cigar-smelling hand. With that he stormed off, loudly cursing Western corruption, to the bedroom of one of his less troublesome wives.

Furious, Nasrah went to her bedroom, but not to bed. She hurled a few things into an Hermès overnight bag and made her way to the garage, where she could choose from among eleven cars. (The prince loved to drive, and was known personally to most Virginia state troopers.) She decided not to take the Maserati, the Lamborghini, the Maybach, or the Ferrari, these having too many buttons of uncertain provenance on the dash, and settled instead on the Mercedes in which Khalil usually chauffeured her, and with whose controls she was quite familiar, including the special button on the walnut dash that overrode the guards' control of the front gate.

So it was that Nasrah found herself roaring out the gates past alarmed guards, with the grim Shazzik and two of his men, fierce Wargha tribesmen in blue suits, in hot pursuit.

But where to go? She'd missed the turn to Washington.

After colliding with several trees and going through a succession of red lights, she found herself turning north on Route 123 at a speed triple the legal limit, a fact not lost on Virginia State Trooper Harmon G. Gillitts.

It was at this point, with Trooper Gillitts's red, white, and blue flashing lights and urgent siren behind her, that she saw the sign announcing GEORGE BUSH CENTER FOR INTELLIGENCE. Any port in a storm.

The sight of a car approaching at high speed, followed by a state policeman in apparent hot pursuit, is not a welcome one at U.S. government installations. By the time Nasrah had reached the front gate of CIA headquarters, a steel barrier had risen up from the cement. This abruptly and loudly terminated her forward progress, activating so many airbags that she disappeared from sight, concussed.

As Nasrah dreamed of turquoise antelopes flying over a boundless black desert, the United States government was waking to the reality of an incident of epic dimensions.

The CIA guards and Trooper Gillitts, weapons drawn, examined their catch through the car's windows. All they could see, amid the airbags, was two distinctly feminine hands, the one on the left bearing enough diamonds to put their children combined through Ivy League colleges and law school.

Another expensive German car drove up, this one bearing Shazzik, looking even grimmer than usual, and his two *mukfelleen*. The guards and Gillitts noted the diplomatic license plate but did not holster their weapons.

Shazzik emerged from the car and in his accustomed peremptory manner—Hamooji retainers are not renowned for their courtesy to nonroyals—announced that the

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smashed vehicle contained a member of the royal household. He asserted his rights of extraction.

This was too much for Trooper Gillitts. As a Marine Corps reservist he had spent time in Wasabia during one of America's periodic interventionist spasms in the region. As a result he could not stand Wasabis (a common sentiment among foreign visitors).

He dispensed with the "sir" with which he usually addressed even the most wretched of his highway detainees, thrust out his impressive reservist pectorals at the chamberlain while tightening his palm around the grip of his Glock 9 mm, and counterasserted jurisdiction on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Stonewall Jackson at First Bull Run, just down the road, had been no more immovable.

The CIA guards, meanwhile, had pressed buttons summoning backup in the form of an armored vehicle capable—should any gate situation deteriorate seriously—of launching missiles, and also of passing impressive amounts of electrical current through the bodies of undesirables. A helicopter, with snipers, was put into play.

Amid this bruit of rotor blades, male barking, and ban-tam outthrusts of chest, Nasrah's hallucinations ended. She stirred inside her nylon cocoon. The airbags deflated sufficiently to allow her wiggle room. She peered with horror at the standoff taking place outside her car and did what anyone would in such circumstances. She reached for her cell phone.

Florence Farfaletti had been in the U.S. Foreign Service long enough to know that when a phone rings after midnight it is a) never a wrong number and b) never a call you want to get. But being a deputy to the deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs (DDASNEA), she c) had to take the call.

"Farfaletti," she said, with as much professional crisp as she could muster in the middle of a ruined REM cycle.

"Flor-ents!"

Florence struggled against the glue of sleep. She recognized the Wasabian difficulty with soft *cs*. The voice was young, urgent, scared, familiar.

"Nasrah?"

"It's me, Florents! It's Nasrah!"

Florence flicked on the light and grimaced at the clock. What was this about?

She had met Nasrah years before, in Kaffa. Nasrah was the daughter of a lesser sheikh of the Azami tribe, lovely, intelligent, and self-educated—the only way Wasabi women could acquire an education, since they were barred from schooling above age fifteen.

Florence had grown up fascinated by her grandfather's tales of the Middle East. She had majored in Arabic studies and was fluent by the time she graduated from Yale. There

she had met Hamzi, a minor Wasabi princeling—charming, handsome, rakish, and rich. What American girl with a predilection for the Middle East wouldn't have fallen in love? They were married a week after graduation.

Following a honeymoon in the Mediterranean, Florence arrived in her new home of Kaffa to a succession of exponentially depressing discoveries. She found herself under virtual house arrest, required to wear the veil outside the home and to be accompanied by a male escort. With this much she resolved to cope. But within three months she discovered that her birth-control pills had been switched for sugar substitutes—the kind one puts in coffee. Confronted, Hamzi shrugged and announced that it was time, anyway, that she bore him a child. She retaliated in the Lysistrata fashion, by withholding sex, whereupon he went into a rage and announced the next evening over dinner—as if remembering a dentist appointment—that he was taking a second wife.

The following morning Florence drove herself (a flogging offense) to the U.S. embassy and said, Beam me up, Scotty. The response was, You got yourself into this, and now you expect us to get you out? She was handed a pamphlet titled "What American Women Should Understand When They Marry a Wasabi National." The State Department's reflexive response to any American in extremis abroad is to hand over a pamphlet, along with a list of incompetent local lawyers, and say, We told you so.

Florence was not one to be deterred. She announced that she would not leave the embassy except in a car driven by an embassy staffer to Prince Babullah Airport. An enterprising young foreign-service officer, of Italian extraction like herself, worked out a quick and dirty arrangement with the Italian embassy and got her out of the country on an Italian passport.

"Do you know what an honor killing is?" Florence asked. "Where she's from, it's what happens to a woman who dishonors her husband. No trial, no jury, no appeal, no ACLU, no Barbara Walters, just death. By stoning or decapitation. You with me?"

Back in Washington she went to work for a Middle Eastern foundation. One day, bored and thinking about the officer in Kaffa who had rescued her, she sat for the foreign-service exam. She passed. Being fluent in Arabic and an expert on Arab culture, she was posted to Chad. Following 9/11 it was thought that her skills might be more useful elsewhere at State, and she was moved to Near Eastern Affairs.

Florence and Nasrah had reconnected socially in Washington at an embassy reception, one of the few occasions when Wasabi wives were on public display. They had man-

aged to get together for half a dozen lunches in French restaurants, where Nasrah ordered expensive wines in view of the frantic Khalil. Florence liked Nasrah, who laughed easily and was deliciously indiscreet. But why was Nasrah calling at this hour?

"Flor-ents. You must help me—I need asylum! Please!"

Florence felt her chest go tight. *Asylum*. Within the State Department this was known as "the A-word," a nightmare term in a bureaucracy dedicated to stasis and inertia, a word that sent shudders down a thousand rubber spines.

Florence was now wide awake. The wife of the ambassador of the country that supplied America with most of its imported fossil fuel was asking her, a mid-level foreign-service officer, for asylum. Her crisis training kicked in. She heard a voice inside her head. It said Stall. This was instantly drowned out by a second voice, saying Help! The second voice was real, and coming through the phone.

Florence found herself saying, "Tell them you're injured. Insist they take you to a hospital. Fairfax Hospital. Insist. Nasrah—do you understand?"

She rose and dressed and, even though hurrying, put on her pearl earrings. Always wear your earrings, her mother had told her from an early age.

Outside the emergency-room entrance Florence recognized Shazzik and two *mukfelleen*. For the first time in her life she wished she were wearing a veil.

Shazzik was furious, making demands of—she guessed—several CIA security officers. But what worried her more was the amount of Virginia state trooperage outside: seven cruisers. Someone was bound to call the media, and once that happened, the options narrowed.

Two armed hospital security guards stood athwart the doors to the ER. Florence pulled her scarf up as a makeshift veil, lowered her head so as to look demure, and approached.

"I'm here to see Nasrah Hamooj. I am her family." Her dark hair and Mediterranean complexion made her look credibly Middle Eastern.

"Name?"

Neither "Florence" nor "Farfaletti" sounding terribly Wasabian, Florence said, "*Malja*." It meant "asylum" in Arabic—a fact that would in all likelihood be lost on a Virginia hospital security guard.

Word was sent in. It came back: Let her in.

"She's all right. Her CAT scan and MRI were clean," a doctor told Florence. He was young and not quite as good-looking as the ones in television dramas, but, judging from the way he regarded Florence, an appreciator of beauty. Florence had grasped, as soon as boys had begun to bay outside her windows, that in addition to being a gift, beauty was a tool, like a Swiss army knife.

"Could you do another? Just in case?"

"She is your ... ?"

"Sister."

"Well, we've established from a medical point of view that your sister is all right. Were you aware that she was drinking?"

"Dear, dear."

"She's lucky to be alive."

"Can you just keep her here? Under observation?"

"This isn't the Betty Ford Clinic."

"A few *hours* is all I'm asking."

"The insurance company—"

Florence took the doctor by the arm and tugged him to a corner. He didn't resist. Men tend to yield to pretty women dragging them into corners. She dropped the Wasabi accent.

"I am asking you on behalf of the United States government"—she flashed her State Department ID—"to keep this woman in this hospital for a few hours. *Surely* there are some more tests you can give her."

"What's going on?"

"Do you know what an honor killing is?"

"This is a hospital, in case you hadn't—"

"Where she comes from, it's what happens to a woman who dishonors her husband or relative. No trial, no jury, no appeal, no Supreme Court, no ACLU, no Barbara Walters, just death. By stoning or decapitation. You with me?"

"Who is she?"

"She's the wife of the Wasabi ambassador. One of his wives. She tried to run away. If you release her into their custody before I can figure something out, it's probably a death sentence."

"Jesus, lady."

"Sorry to lay that on you." Florence smiled at the doctor.

"How long am I supposed to keep her?"

"Thank you. Just—a few hours. That would really be great. There's a tall man outside, Middle Eastern, very unpleasant-looking, thin, with a pencil moustache, a high forehead, and a goatee. Tell him you need to do more tests and she's in isolation."

"Oh, *man*."

"You're really, really great to do this. I won't forget it." She nudged him toward the swinging doors and then located Nasrah, drawing the curtain around her bed.

Nasrah had held it together until now, but seeing Florence, she burst. The Great Desert in Wasabia had not seen such moisture in an entire year. She had, in the manner of women of the region, applied copious mascara, which now ran sootily down her tawny cheeks. Florence listened and nodded and handed her a succession of tissues.

Eventually Nasrah's tear ducts gave up from exhaustion. Calm descended on her. She looked up at the hospital ceiling and said, "What will they do with me?"

The curtain parted with a fierce zip to reveal Prince Bawad and his retinue. *He looks like Othello*, Florence thought. *And here's Shazzik in the role of Iago*.

Accompanying them were State's chief security officer

and—oh, hell—her boss, Charles Duckett. And McFall, the CIA's chief for the Near East.

Behind this scrum of officialdom Florence heard the doctor manfully explaining that there was some possibility of subdural something, but it was clear that he was being overruled. Bawad, whose finger snaps could summon a kingdom's resources, had brought his personal physician and orderlies to carry Nasrah off. She was, as far as the United States was concerned, Wasabi national soil.

The next morning Florence sought out George Phish. George was a desk limpet in the political/econ section who amused himself during his lunch hour by devising crossword puzzles in ancient Phoenician, one of twelve languages he spoke fluently. He claimed to dream in seven of them, and George was not the sort to boast. His model was Sir Richard Burton, the nineteenth-century polymath explorer who spoke thirty-five languages and dreamed in seventeen. One of the most daring adventurers of all time, Burton was a curious role model for the agoraphobic George, who had managed to wriggle out of every foreign posting he had ever been offered except one eighteen-month stint in Ottawa, during which he learned Micmac.

"I had the most vivid dream last night," he said. "In Turkish. I was on the Bosphorus with Lord Byron and Shelley. We were each in one of those idiotic tourist pedal-boats, trying to get from one side to the other, only the continents started moving apart. What do you make of that? You look awful. Did we not sleep last night?"

"George, Nasrah Hamooj asked me for asylum last night."

"If you think that's more important than interpreting my dream, fine."

Florence told him what had happened.

"Hmm. I knew something must be cooking. Cables between here and Kaffa have been flying fast and furious. They scrambled a royal Wasabi transport out of Jacksonville to Dulles. Oh, the humanity—oh, the paperwork."

George caught the look on Florence's face. "That was she on board? Oh, dear. I hear the sound of sharpening steel."

"I'll call Tony in Kaffa," Florence said. "Maybe he can ..."

"What? Storm the palace? Forget it. Maybe they'll let her off with a hundred lashes."

For the next three days Florence stayed at the office until past midnight, writing. When she had finished, she printed three copies of her proposal, placed them in TOP SECRET folders, and gave one to Duckett's secretary, another to George, and sent the third to the seventh floor—straight to the top.

Florence entered Charles Duckett's office without knocking and closed the door behind her. It shut with a portentous click.

Duckett was leaning back in his chair, as if trying physically to distance himself from the document in front of him.

He was looking at it as though it were an animal, days dead and far gone in putrefaction, that had been malevolently dumped on a pristine altar consecrated to solemn rituals and tended to by votaries of an elite cult.

The cover sheet looked up insistently.

FEMALE EMANCIPATION AS A MEANS
OF ACHIEVING LONG-TERM
POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE NEAR EAST:
AN OPERATIONAL PROPOSAL

Submitted by Florence Farfaletti, DDASNEA
Circulation: SecState, DASNEA

"I know you've been under strain, Florence. I understand that—"

"Charles, the reason I sent it to S before getting your approval was to relieve you of responsibility. And to be honest, I didn't think I'd get your approval. So what do you think?"

"What do I think?" Duckett said absently. "Of the fact that one of my deputies, whose actions reflect directly on me, has circulated a proposal calling for the fomenting of revolution in a country that supplies one third of America's energy needs—a country to which we are formally allied, to which we are vitally and strategically linked. Circulated it and sent it to ... the Secretary? What do I think?"

"I truly believe that—"

"Do you see this phone on my desk, Florence?"

"Yes, Charles, I see the phone."

"Any moment now that phone is going to ring. It will be the seventh floor calling. 'The Secretary would like to see you. Right away.' That's what the voice will say."

"Charles—"

"During my time here I've endeavored to make my infrequent visits to S occasions of light. Sometimes, given the region it falls to us to superintend, that is not possible. But at least when the Secretary sees me walk into his office, he does not say to himself, 'Why, here's Charlie Duckett! Say, isn't he the one whose staff sends me cockamamie proposals to undermine the social structure of America's most strategic partner in the Middle East? Why, come on in, Charlie boy! What's that skunk works of yours cooked up this time? Oh, and by the way, Charlie old bean, what's this about one of your people operating an underground railroad for runaway wives? Gosh, why didn't I think of that? What better way to promote harmony between our two countries! Let's give that girl of yours a promotion!' Are you out of your fucking *mind*, Farfaletti?"

"I made it clear to the Secretary in my cover letter that you hadn't signed off on it."

Duckett rubbed his forehead. "Now I'm beginning to think you're working for them."

"Them? Who are you talking about?"

"Them." Duckett did the Langley Hook.



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"CIA? Charles, I work for the State Department. I work for you."

"No, no. This could only be an Agency operation. To destroy State—from within. It's happened before, you know."

"Charles, I'm on your side. I'm just trying to think outside the box."

"What box? Pandora's?"

"If we want to bring about change in the Middle East, this is the way to do it. I'm convinced of it. It might be the only way."

"How do I explain? Where do I begin? It is not our job to bring about change in the Middle East."

"It's not?"

"No, it is not. Our job is to manage reality."

His phone rang. The shadow of the angel of death passed over Charles Duckett's features.

"Yes," he said grimly, swallowing. "Yes. Right away."

The next morning Florence received notification that her "request for transfer" to the visa section of the U.S. consulate in the Cape Verde Islands had been approved, effective immediately.

"You might have told me you'd applied," George said. "I thought we had a relationship."

"I'm not going to Cape Verde, for God's sake," she said. "I'm out of here." She kissed George on the forehead and collected her things and left.

It was a stunning fall day. Feeling liberated after drop-

Florence had made an appointment with Rick Renard, stating only that she represented a "significant institutional client." To a strategic planner's ear, no sweeter syllables existed.

ping off her letter of resignation, Florence zipped up her black leather jumpsuit (the sight of which caused cricks in many a male neck), tied her hair in a ponytail, donned her red helmet, flipped down the visor, pressed the starter button on her motorcycle, and screamed out of the city at a breakneck speed.

At the end of River Road she turned left and roared deeper into the country. She glanced down at the speedometer and saw that she was going almost 90 miles an hour—too fast, but what bliss! The fall leaves went by in a lush slipstream blur of gold and red and orange.

Another color suddenly appeared in her rearview, a color not found in nature: electric blue, and flashing. For a moment she considered trying to outrun it, but then she let up on the throttle and rumbled over to the shoulder to await the inevitable: Do you have any idea how fast you were going, ma'am?

The man who got out of the unmarked car was not in uniform. The first discordant note that struck her was his age. He was in his mid-sixties, at least. He was trim, with the body of someone who had once been an athlete or in the military, gray about the temples, with wire-rimmed glasses perched on a sharp nose. His eyes were bright blue and twinkly. His lips were pursed, but pleasantly, in something like a smile. It didn't compute. Florence looked at the flashing blue light mounted on his dashboard. Some county supervisor or sheriff?

"Goodness gracious, young lady. Ninety miles an hour—on a road teeming with deer? You could have been killed." It was said in an avuncular way. "And what a waste that would be." He was grinning at her.

"Excuse me," she said. "Who are you?"

"Well, that's the question, isn't it?" he said, chuckling. "That's quite a machine you have there. Used to do a bit of motorcycling myself. Oh, yes, yes."

Still astride the bike, Florence moved her thumb over the starter button.

"Oh, now, don't be in such a rush. I should think you'd be interested to hear what I have to say. Very interested."

Something kept her from pressing the button.

"We read your proposal, Florence."

Florence stared.

"On achieving stability in the Middle East? Very interesting—original. And by gosh, out of the box. Not at all your usual State Department pap. No wonder they wanted to transfer you to Cape Verde! I had to look it up on a map. May I buy you a cup of coffee? This must seem very forward, I know."

"Are you with the State Department?" Florence asked.

"Hardly. Come on, I'll buy. There has to be a Starbucks around here."

"I don't—"

"Do you remember the Starbucks in Kaffa?"

"What?"

"The one at the corner of Alkakazir and Bin Qatif? How the *mukfelleen* made them cover the mermaid's boobs on the logo? Now whenever I go to a Starbucks, I check for her boobs. Silly, I know. Do you want to follow me, or shall I follow you?"

"I ..."

"I know. You came out here to feel the wind in your hair, the road rise up to greet you. But all I'm asking for is ten minutes of your time at a neutral, well-lit public place. If after that you want to walk away, no one's going to stop you, and I'll still pay for the latte. You like double-tall nonfat, yes? And sugar substitute, preferably not in lieu of birth-control pills?"

The only human being to whom she had confided that detail was a State Department polygraph operator, during

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her background check. She didn't know what to say, so she followed the man to a suburban Starbucks.

They sat outside, next to a parking lot full of expensive cars driven by people who looked like they had something to do with horses.

"Look," she said, "before we go any further, who are you?"

The man appeared to consider the question. He said thoughtfully, "Why don't you just call me 'Uncle Sam'?"

"I take it you're with the government. What is it you want?"

"Quite possibly the same thing you do. Long-term political stability in the Middle East. Now, there's a goal."

"You agree with my proposal?"

"Well, we've tried pretty much everything else, haven't we? And what a pig's breakfast we've made. Dear, dear, dear. The remarkable thing is how well we mean, America. And yet it always turns out so—badly. But I didn't come here to bore you to death, no, no. I came to welcome you aboard. If you'll come."

"Aboard what, exactly?"

"Don't ask, don't tell. All you need to know is that you could have the best job in the United States government. No Charlie Duckett looking over your shoulder, no endless reports and memos and all that razzmatazz. No inspector generals, no Senate committees. Anything you need to do the job, you just ask your uncle. Within reason, please. I don't want to be getting bills from Maserati or Chanel or Van Cleef & Arpels, thank you very much."

"What part of the government would I be working for?"

"The Department of Outside the Box."

"Come on. I want to know."

"Young lady, you've been handed the ultimate credit card. Why question it?"

"What if I'm caught?"

"Well," he said, chuckling again, "exactly my point. Not to make light of it."

"For a second there you sounded like Satan."

"Satan? That's a terrible thing to say. I'm one of the nicest people you'll ever meet."

"Why me?"

"It was your idea, wasn't it? You know the language. The region."

"So do a lot of people."

"It's a vendetta. You're Italian!"

"I'd file a discrimination complaint if I knew where to find you."

"Oh, all right—you're passionate to emancipate women throughout the Arab world. As a means toward achieving lasting political stability in the region. Does that assuage your outraged ethnic pride?"

"It's a start."

"I'll pin ten dollars on the Virgin Mary at the next wop street fair I come across."

"That'll cost you twenty bucks."

"For someone whose grandfather helped Benito Mussolini try to conquer North Africa, you certainly pack plenty of attitude, young lady. Are you with me? Good. Let's talk about your team."

The offices of Renard Strategic Communications International are two blocks from Washington's Dupont Circle, far enough from K Street to be geographically distinct from that corridor of porcine influence-peddlers but close enough so that Rick Renard could have lunch with his many friends and soul mates who worked there.

Renard's handling of a steaming-hot religious tuber had riveted Florence's attention. A year before, the Reverend Roscoe G. Holybone ("the G stands for God," as his literature humbly put it), spiritual leader of several hundred thousand fanatically devoted southern Baptists, had declared from his televised pulpit in Loblolly, Georgia, that the Prophet Muhammad was a "degenerate." It was the consensus, even among the stiffer evangelical element, that the reverend had gone off his meds, but this was scant comfort to the prophet's 1.5 billion followers. Fatwas were issued from a hundred minarets, which seemed only to inflame Holybone and his minions, who, like mailed Crusaders on the parapets of Acre, responded with burning pitch and missiles, shouting defiance.

This hugger-mugger took place, inconveniently, in the middle of a presidential-primary race, requiring the various candidates to spend precious airtime denouncing the reverend instead of detailing their bold visions for America's future. Events reached a climax when the governor of Georgia was forced into the unenviable position of having to call out the National Guard in order to protect Holybone, then barricaded with a handful of loyal followers inside his church.

Into this radioactive swamp few PR men or women would have waded. Yet only hours after the reverend's helicopter was brought down by a shoulder-fired missile during his attempt to flee, there was Rick Renard on every TV channel, issuing statements on behalf of the reverend's heirs, calling for an end to hostilities and for the healing to begin, and, moreover, pledging \$5 million to build a Baptist-Muslim Intercultural Center on the campus of Holybone University, featuring five basketball courts, each facing east for spontaneous midgame prayer. Today relations between Holyboners and Georgia's admittedly not very numerous Muslims are immeasurably better than during the Days of Rage. Credit for that belongs not only to whoever fired the SA-7 at the reverend's copter but also to Rick Renard and his deft spinings. A man as fearless as that Florence wanted on her team.

Florence had made an appointment, stating only that she represented a "significant institutional client." To a strategic planner's ear, no sweeter syllables existed. Renard



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went through the motions of pretending that he was all booked up that day and then pretending to spot a cancellation. Why, he could see her that very afternoon.

Walking into Renard's office, Florence saw a row of clocks mounted on the wall, indicating the time in various capitals around the world. They were intended to proclaim Renard Strategic Communications International's global reach.

Rick rose, smiling, to greet her.

"Ms. Farfaletti," he said, as though it were the most important name in the world. He tried not to stare, but his eyes couldn't help lingering on the unexpected loveliness before him. She reminded him of whatshisname, the Italian portrait painter. He really must remember these names—it always impressed a certain type of client. Modig ... Modig ... the one who painted women with their heads cocked to one side, as if they were on the verge of asking the painter, "Would you please have sex with me?"

"Mr. Renard?"

"Sorry. It's just, you reminded me of someone. Have we met?"

"No. But I'm a great admirer of your work."

"Farfaletti. That would be ..."

"Finnish."

Rick smiled. Always smile when a prospective client makes a joke.

"It means 'little butterfly.' More or less. In Italian."

"Is that a married name?"

"No."

"How can I be of service? You said over the phone it involved the Middle East." Rick gestured toward the wall of clocks. One gave the time in Dubai. "We have offices throughout the region."

"Mr. Renard, you have mail drops throughout the region. Post-office boxes. I'd hardly call them offices."

Rick blushed. "With modern communications these days, you don't really need offices. But I assure you, we're hard-wired in that part of the world."

"Are you still working for the government of North Korea?"

"No, no. That was just one project. And it was before the Japan thing."

"The launching-the-missile-at-Japan thing?"

Rick cleared his throat. "I am not currently in a relationship with the government of North Korea."

"Field of Screams.' Wasn't that what the newspapers called it?"

"I'm glad you brought that up. For the record, I was unaware that the golf course in question had been built with so-called slave labor." Rick sighed. "Well, 'slavery' is a very subjective term, isn't it?"

"Not especially."

"They asked me to put on a celebrity pro-am golf tournament. To promote international peace. At the time, I thought,

Why not? Would I do it again?" Rick shrugged. "Now, did you come here to talk about golf in North Korea?"

"No. I came because I want to bring about permanent stability in the Middle East."

"Hmm." Rick nodded thoughtfully, as if he had been asked for his ideas on promoting a new brand of toothpaste. "What sort of budget did you have in mind?"

"Money would not be a factor. Within reason, of course."

"In my experience, Ms. Farfaletti, 'within reason' is generally where money not only becomes a factor but is *the* factor."

Florence placed her briefcase on Rick's desk and snapped open the clasps. Inside were two bricks of stiff new thousand-dollar bills.

Renard tried not to drool. "You said you were with ...?"

"The United States government."

"Oh." Rick stared at the lumps of cash as if they might suddenly blow up.

"Do you always sound that disappointed when a client places two hundred thousand dollars in cash on your desk?"

"No, no. I assure you, my inner child is doing somersaults. What sort of permanent stability in the Middle East did you have in mind? And may I ask what ... branch of our wonderful government, with whom I have always maintained excellent—well, good—relations, you represent?"

"I'm with the State Department."

"Ah. CIA. I'm a huge fan. Your colleagues were very helpful to me over there in North Korea when the mine exploded on the golf course."

"I didn't say I was with the CIA, Mr. Renard."

"Gotcha. We're on the same page. So I would be working for the State Department. Well, I've always wanted to give something back to my country."

Florence and "Uncle Sam" had been sequestered in a small safe house in Alexandria, Virginia, for two days, going through personnel files. The house was normally used to debrief or entertain defectors. To judge from the reek of old cigarette smoke, the defectors must all have died of lung cancer.

They examined the files on Uncle Sam's laptop, which appeared to have intimate access to the files of U.S. government intelligence officers and covert operators. Whatever doubts Florence may have had about Uncle Sam, he was certainly wired.

Florence paused on a file. "I want someone with a grudge."

"They all hate Wasabia."

"No. Against us. Someone angry at the government, for the way it's gone about everything. Someone who's pissed off."

Finally he went upstairs to lie down, leaving Florence to scroll through the personnel records of America's armies of the night. They began to blur. Then she realized that

she was now hunting according to looks. An hour into this phase of the search she suddenly stopped scrolling.

He was in his Army uniform, green beret drooping jauntily over his forehead. Florence recognized some of the ribbons on his chest. Bronze Star with V-Device. He was grinning at the camera like a high school senior who'd just nailed the homecoming queen in the back of his Ford pickup. The date at the bottom showed that the photograph had been taken twelve years earlier. She scrolled in search of a more recent photo and found it. The grin was gone. She read the file and saw why. No longer the eager young warrior. Yes, this one. She had read and reread his file by the time Uncle Sam returned.

"I've found him," she announced.

He scanned the bio. "Good lord, he's completely unsuitable."

"That's why I want him."

"Young lady, I'm not running a dating service here," Uncle Sam said, snorting. "Look at this file. I'm surprised he's even still in government employ. Did it escape your notice that he's the one who called in that cruise-missile strike in Dar es Salaam last year—the one that *destroyed the residence* of the Indonesian ambassador?"

"I happened to note that," Florence replied. "It was a good target. The strike destroyed an al-Qaeda chem-weap plant. They put it right next to the ambassador's residence—disguised as a children's prosthetic-limb factory. Good for him for calling in the strike."

Uncle Sam sighed dramatically and scrolled. "What about this? When your Mr.—what's his name?—Bobby Thibodeaux was station chief in Matar, he had an affair with the wife of the U.S. ambassador. What does that tell us?"

"That he was horny. It's of less importance that he was doing the macarena with the ambassador's wife than that he was station chief in Matar. Look at his file. Station chief in the capital, Amo-Amas, three years. Deputy chief Kaffa, two years. Fluent in Arabic and French. Look at these terrorist captures. He's the one who got Adnan Bahesh, arguably the worst human being on the planet. Look at his chest. Three Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts. This isn't good enough for you?" Florence closed the laptop, slid it away from her, and crossed her arms over her bosom. "Search over. Fetch."

There was one last person to recruit, and he was going to be the hardest. He arrived at the safe house at the appointed time. He was always prompt.

"Florence? What is all this? Oh, my God, it's *foul* in here."

"Shut up, George. And shut the door."

George looked around the apartment, which had been furnished by a colorblind gnome who worked in a subdivision of a subdivision of a sub-bureaucracy, whose job was to decorate safe houses for U.S. intelligence agencies. The paintings had been bulk purchased at Wal-Mart and were

one aesthetic level above black-velvet depictions of bulldogs in visors playing poker.

George winced. "I see you've been to Sotheby's."

"Do you want something to drink?"

"What are you pouring? Wine in a box?"

"George, you and I are going to accomplish something big. Something very big."

"Can I think it over? No."

"I haven't explained yet."

"You don't have to. I receive this flash-priority hush-hush ukase from S directing me to this pied-à-terre from the third—no, second—circle of hell. Isn't this where we put the

"I came," Florence said, "because I wanted to bring about permanent stability in the Middle East." Renard nodded thoughtfully. "What sort of budget did you have in mind?"

North Korean defectors? So they'll feel at home?"

"Just listen." Florence explained about Uncle Sam and the plan. "George, will you please take your fingers out of your ears?"

"When I open my eyes, I'll be back in the office at my desk. All this will not have happened. One, two, three. You're still here," he said forlornly. "I'm still here."

"George, you're one of the most brilliant men I know. You're wasted behind that desk. Look at this opportunity we've been handed. It'll never come again."

"You don't know the first thing about this 'Uncle Sam.'"

"You sound like my mother. I don't know who he is, but he very definitely works for The Man. And he's handing us the chance to make history."

"I don't want to make history. I want my desk. Nine years to go before I get my pension. I'm going to—well, never mind."

"What? Open an antique store in Provincetown?"

"As a matter of fact, no. And just who elected you Queen Mab? You are way over the line."

"I apologize. George, I couldn't care less what team you play for. But I want you on mine. I can't do this without you."

"I'll think about it. That's all."

"We leave in two weeks. You'll need shots."

"I'll kill myself. And you'll be responsible. I'll leave a note."

"You'll do nothing of the sort." She put her arm around his shoulder. "George, it's going to be fun."

"You've seen that damn movie too many times. It's not going to be fun. It's going to be a nightmare. And I'm going to be in it."

So. She had her team. On to Aqaba. ■

Part II of "Florence of Arabia" will appear next month.

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BOOKS & CRITICS

SEPTEMBER 2004 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

THIS MONTH:

Policy Wank

"After its brief, proud season as a wrist-spraining fashion statement," Tom Carson writes, Bill Clinton's *My Life* "is destined to end up as a prominent but largely pristine totem on liberal America's bookshelves."

PAGE 126

Mother of All Mothers

B. R. Myers reviews four recent books about North Korea and the two Kims who have led it. "If South Korea's dictatorships were America's running dogs, then North Korea was the Eastern bloc's house cat: intractable, convinced of its superiority ... but never much good at feeding itself."

PAGE 133

Mirror, Mirror

A reading list of astonishing memoirs by (and about) deeply repellent people, by Terry Castle

PAGE 139

The Immortal

Christopher Hitchens reviews the "altogether first-rate" *Borges: A Life*, by Edwin Williamson

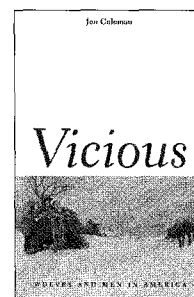
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NEW & NOTEWORTHY

Wolves, Actors, Jihadis

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

This is a sick-making book. It chronicles and interprets Americans' relations with wolves by following a single European immigration path from southern New England in the 1620s to Colorado in the early twentieth century, by which time hundreds of thousands of the animals had been slaughtered, rendering them all but extinct in the United States. (By the way, not a single case of a wolf's killing a human being has been recorded in North America.) But Coleman, a Notre Dame historian who evinces impatience bordering on contempt for those who sentimentalize animals, isn't concerned with this environmental catastrophe—which, as he makes clear, was explicable if not inevitable, given wolves' peculiar vulnerabilities and the insatiable demands of modern settlement and agriculture. Rather, he seeks to fathom the 300-year history of limitless sadism that attended the wolves' extermination. These canids were not merely annihilated: they were dragged behind horses until they ripped apart; they were set on fire; they were hamstrung; their backs were broken; they were captured alive to be released with their mouths or penises wired shut; their intestines were torn open by hooks hidden in balls of tallow left for them to eat. And as the abundant historical record shows, wolves responded to capture (they were regularly caught in traps or in their dens) not by lashing out but by submission; human beings as a matter of course ignored "a frightened creature's obvious pleas for mercy" and proceeded to torture. Coleman asserts that what he euphemistically calls "agricultural pacification" demands no explanation; but "why," he asks, "was death not enough?" The formal and informal campaigns to terrorize and exterminate wolves because of their ubiquity and the menace they posed to open-range livestock (the most concentrated form of wealth for most Americans for most of the country's history) are well documented, and Coleman proves an indefatigable researcher as he traces this orgy of brutality. But the very evidence he reveals renders the answers he offers to his central question unconvincing—which makes his study all the more disturbing. Coleman asserts that since human beings aren't "intrinsically sinister," their behavior toward wolves has to be understood in its



Vicious

VICIOUS
by Jon Coleman
Yale

cultural and historical context. He thus looks to folklore and to the specific challenges that beset Euro-Americans. To be sure, killing and torturing wolves to some degree represented a desire to “bring order to a rambunctious natural environment” and were “expressions of revenge, anger, and dominion,” as Coleman avers. But that doesn’t make the behavior any more understandable or, for that matter, any less “sinister”—after all, many instances of, say, sexual violence are for the perpetrator also expressions of revenge, anger, and dominion; and the lynching of African-American men in the South could be described in precisely the same terms Coleman employs to explain the torture of wolves: “conservative brutality”; “atrocities committed in the name of order, authority, and decorum.” Although wolves plainly carried a great deal of folkloric baggage for Euro-Americans, they were hardly the only animals to suffer sadistic treatment; a variety of creatures “fell victim to an animal whose behavior mocked the rules of predation.” “Human hunters not only attacked without constraint, they often expended more calories killing beasts than they gained digesting them.” And Coleman offhandedly notes, “Many rural Americans considered brutalizing wild creatures amusing. They recounted instances of stabbing, hacking, and pitchforking animals with fondness.” The capture and torture of wolves was often recorded, but, for instance, raccoons (often treed for sport) probably suffered a no less atrocious fate. Despite his prodigious research, the author seems to be groping for answers to his intelligently and originally framed question, because ultimately cruelty isn’t subject to the “historical analysis” he promises. That analysis can partially explain why cruelty was directed at certain targets at certain times, but it can’t explain the cruelty itself; Coleman can’t in fact tell us why death was not enough. As E. L. Godkin wrote in 1893, when trying to explain lynching, “We venture to assert that seven-eighths of every lynching party is composed of pure, sporting

mob, which goes ... just as it goes to a cockfight ... for the gratification of the lowest and most degraded instincts of humanity.” The terrible truth (obvious in the photographs of the broken and mutilated victims in this book), the only explanation for the history Coleman records, is that given half a chance, too many men will behave viciously. (This is one of two sweeping and ambitious scholarly studies of animal-human relations in American history to be published this season. The other is Oxford’s *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*, by Virginia DeJohn Anderson. Also being published, by North Point, is Mark Derr’s at times perceptive but somewhat cobbled-together popular history, *A Dog’s History of America*.)

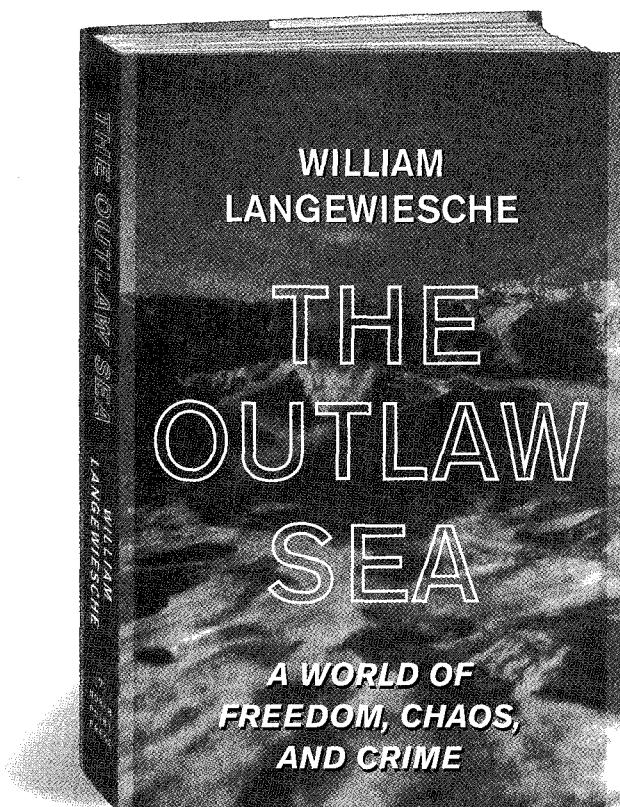


THE MOVIES

Who the Hell’s in It, by Peter Bogdanovich (Knopf). Nearly a decade before he became a boy-genius movie director (*The Last Picture Show*, *What’s Up, Doc?*, *Paper Moon*: boom, boom, boom), Bogdanovich was a boy-genius film scholar. His elegant, groundbreaking studies of Howard Hawks, John Ford, and Orson Welles remain among the most penetrating appraisals of those directors; and his later *This Is Orson Welles* is easily the smartest and most endearing portrait of that über boy genius. But even before he wrote about movies, Bogdanovich was a boy-genius actor (he studied with Stella Adler in the afternoons after his high school classes let out, and he was an understudy with John Houseman’s American Shake-

speare Festival before he was eighteen; he now plays Dr. Melfi’s shrink on *The Sopranos*). His 1997 book, *Who the Devil Made It* (an egregious title, even if it comes from a phrase of Hawks’s), collected decades’ worth of his interviews with and portraits and reminiscences of directors. Now he’s done the same for actors. His *modus operandi* for both topics was identical, and reveals his obsessive love of the movies: In Hollywood (from New York) to write for *Esquire*, he’d seek out and interrogate—pester, really—his heroes, beguiling them with his encyclopedic knowledge of their work. (He includes a hilariously self-deprecating account of finding himself on a plane from L.A. to Denver with an icy Marlene Dietrich, desperately trying to win her over with recondite questions about her performance in *Morocco*, more than forty years earlier. She seems to have thawed somewhere above Pasadena.) They’d talk; he’d write his piece; subject and interviewer would become friends and would go to, say, a Dodgers game, where he’d ask more questions. He’d interview the actor friend’s former director and ask the director about a scene he’d shot with the actor thirty-two years before; then he’d tell the actor what his director had said, and ask him about the scene. After nearly half a century of such pestering, this endearing vampire now knows practically everything about the movies. Although it reads as if it were too hastily assembled, this book is among the richest (and most delightful) ever written about Hollywood. His subjects range from John Cassavetes (one of his best friends) to John Wayne (although they were politically opposed, they shared a reverence for John Ford, and Wayne’s appreciation of Bogdanovich’s minute understanding of Wayne’s work with Ford brought them close) to Jimmy Stewart (they were friends for thirty years, having met when Bogdanovich interviewed Stewart for his profile of Ford; Bogdanovich’s profile of Stewart, written two years later and liberally quoted here, is the most inventively written piece on an actor I’ve encountered) to River Phoenix (whose talent clearly stunned Bogdanovich when he

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Anonymous is even more provocative in his meticulous, nuanced, and dispassionate analysis of bin Laden's leadership, ideology, and tactics, from which he concludes that the terrorist leader is a "talented and personally courageous Muslim who is blessed with sound strategic and tactical judgment, able lieutenants, a reluctant but indispensable bloody-mindedness, and extraordinary patience," and who has articulated a consistent and compelling case, which resonates throughout the Muslim world, that America is attacking Islam.

But Anonymous will draw the most fire for his cogent arguments—contrary to both Democratic and Republican leaders who orate that Islamist terrorists hate America because of its freedom and values—that al-Qaeda and the Islamic world hate this country because of its specific policies and actions, and that bin Laden's war against America (which, Anonymous asserts, has made him the Muslims' most admired figure) isn't an act of rage; rather, it aims to alter those policies. Accordingly, Anonymous advocates a combination of stronger military action against Islamist terrorists and insurgents (although he understands the grievances that fuel al-Qaeda, he's convinced that "we are in a fight to the death" with it) and—crucially—"dramatic foreign policy change." This change would include a strenuous effort to achieve energy self-sufficiency; the adoption of a far more modest global role based on an amoral pursuit of discrete and concrete national interests; and the re-examination of America's backing of Israel (he holds that, contrary to ill-informed assertions, the elimination of Israel has long been a cynosure of bin Laden's rhetoric, ideology, and strategy) and of the regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan. (Here Anonymous is uncharacteristically gingerly and disingenuous: although he calls explicitly only for rethinking that support, in fact the only logical conclusion to be reached from his arguments is that we should end it.) Anonymous's position that in foreign policy less is more—that America's security will be enhanced

if Washington forsakes its hegemonic ambitions and many of its attendant foreign commitments—is, I should acknowledge, very similar to arguments I’ve made in this magazine (see “Why America Thinks It Has to Run the World,” June 1996, and “A New Grand Strategy,” January 2002) and elsewhere. But whether one agrees with this book or not, Anonymous’s unsentimental critique deserves rigorous scrutiny and debate. Those looking for forceful dissent and a genuine alternative to the foreign-policy status quo should eschew the intellectually slippery Noam Chomsky, the sadly muddled Gore Vidal, and (most of all) the partisan hack Michael Moore—and instead examine the tough-minded neo-isolationism espoused in this book.

HISTORY & LITERATURE

Heloise & Abelard, by James Burge (HarperSanFrancisco). The terrible love story that this book illuminates is (alas, for one writing a short column) also highly convoluted. Among the most renowned medieval philosophers, Abelard began an affair with his brilliant student Heloise in 1115. Soon pregnant, Heloise married Abelard, though he insisted that the union be kept secret lest it imperil his ecclesiastical career. Following the birth of their son (weirdly christened Astralabe—“To call one’s child after a scientific instrument must have been a sort of joint declaration of uniqueness by the couple,” Burge dryly notes), she returned to live with her uncle Fulbert. But after the couple bridled at Fulbert’s restrictions and Abelard moved Heloise to a convent, Fulbert—for reasons open to varying interpretations—had some thugs take Abelard from his bed and castrate him. Abelard—for reasons also open to varying interpretations—instructed Heloise to give Astralabe to his family and to become a nun; he forsook her and became a monk, albeit a famous and intellectually contentious one. After fifteen years without contact she came upon his autobiography, which he’d addressed to an unnamed monk. Heloise wrote to Abelard, declaring unasham-

edly that despite her vows (and his abandonment), her love for him was undiminished. Five of his letters, along with his autobiography, were found a century later, together with three of her letters—which for nearly 800 years represented her entire literary output. Few pre-modern records give us so exquisite a view of a personality. Fierce and exact, they’re astonishing for the self-awareness they reveal; for their reconciliation of piety and passion; for their depiction of a combination of intense devotion for and reproachful candor toward a beloved (Heloise’s was a persona consumed but not subsumed by romantic love); and for the clarity and frankness with which they dissect sexuality. In 1980 the scholar Constant J. Mews, while reading a modern edition of a fifteenth-century instruction manual for letter writing, discerned that fragments of 113 letters “From ... Two Lovers” were actually taken from missives exchanged by Heloise and Abelard during their affair. Burge is the first biographer fully to exploit this trove, and although the letters reveal nothing dramatically new (“It is a paradox born of the convincing nature of the new letters that they do not substantively affect the main points of the story,” as he nicely puts it), he uses them to explore the striking blend of intense intellectuality and eroticism that characterized Heloise and Abelard’s relationship. Heloise, a supremely elegant writer, emerges as by far the more appealing character, but one very difficult for modern readers to define: she’s ingenuous but astute, submissive (even in the couple’s somewhat sadomasochistic sex) but courageous. (Abelard the cocky, ambitious logician comes across as emotionally oblivious and withdrawn.) At times Burge indulges in psychological speculation that lurches between the obvious and the fanciful, and his writing tends toward the overwrought; so some readers may want to turn to Mews’s intricate but narrower scholarly study, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*. Nevertheless, this is a great tale, which Burge tells vividly and economically. ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and national editor of The Atlantic.

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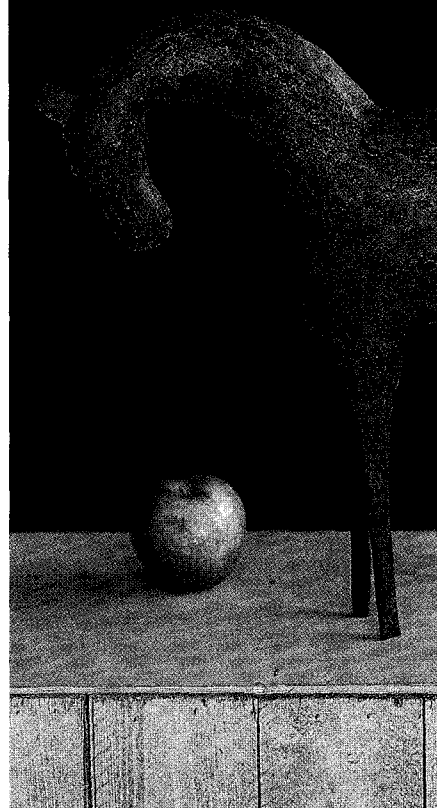
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BOOKS

Policy Wank

Bill Clinton's sodden memoir goes into all the wrong detail

BY TOM CARSON

In hindsight—which kicked in, so far as I could measure, around mid-afternoon of publication day—the most remarkable thing about Bill Clinton's *My Life* was the hullabaloo generated by a book any child could have guessed would be tiresome. Stopping short only of offering the first million customers free kazoo whittled from ex-First Dog Buddy's tibia, the publicity had us half believing we could fork over

\$35 and come away clutching the Clinton autobiography of our dreams—a star-spangled, crazily honking, wake-up-little-Souza combination of Baron Munchausen, Casanova's memoirs, *The Sound and the Hillary*, and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. But even though the last of these was a clear inspiration for *My Life's* marketing, from the suspenseful buildup to the chimes-at-midnight rollout, one difference was that J. K. Rowling's fans could be reasonably sure they weren't buying an *evasive* account of Harry's adventures. Another was that virtually every copy sold of *Goblet of Fire* was promptly devoured cover to cover, which I feel safe assuming was not the case here—and not only because Clinton's dense 957 pages make Rowling's 734 look zippy. The blurb missing from the ads is what Laurence Olivier once wickedly said to Alec Guinness: "Marvelous, old cock! I never realized Malvolio could be played as a bore."

Predictably, the shrieker right looked at *My Life* and saw *Kill Bill, Vol. 3*. But if clamor-gal Ann Coulter's zeal to play Uma Thurman forced her to slog through every word, all I can say is that Bill has had a modest revenge for Whitewater. For less ideologically goaded readers, it was an act of heroic honesty on Knopf's part—and just plain heroism, given Clinton's last-minute delivery—to provide this book with an index. Decades from now, all those fading thumbprints alongside "Flow-

ers, Gennifer" and "Lewinsky, Monica" will be of use in authenticating first editions, and only true sentimentalists will leave a similar smudge next to "Dole, Bob, 1996 election and." In light of all three searches' Sominex-y results, however, the odds are overwhelming that *My Life* is destined to end up as a prominent but largely pristine totem on liberal America's bookshelves

MY LIFE
by Bill Clinton
Alfred A. Knopf

after its brief, proud season as a wrist-spraining fashion statement, with his-and-hers, his-and-his, and hers-and-hers duplications commemorating all the happy marriages begun with shy chat ("Did you get to where he picks Gore yet? Me neither") in the queue for *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Even though the trees felled to produce it are enough to substantially alter his environmental record, Clinton's book was designed not so much to be read as to be an event's central prop; in more than one sense, we weren't really buying the story of his life. Rather, we were being offered a small chance to play spear carriers in an episode of it.

The tradeoff is that in exchange for a stylized concession to our agenda, which is dirt, we have to put up with his, which is vindication. Not that he cops to either motive, of course: "Would I be known for bringing prosperity? For being a peacemaker? ... I didn't have time to think about such things," he writes, rebuking the journalists we've just glimpsed badgering a busy, devoted chief executive to guess how he'll stack up in the history books. Then he bends to his task once again, sustained by a splendidly brusque reflection: "The legacy would take care of itself ..." Coming on page 875 of a book that reads like nothing so much as one man's mammoth attempt to build a dike around his finger, this at least has the familiar Clinton charm of effrontery.

A reasonable semblance of soul-searching was what Knopf paid him \$10 mil for, and it's certainly true that *My Life* features damp wads of much more intimate pseudo-introspection than, say, Eisenhower's memoirs—not that I've gone back to check. ("What caused my hostile feelings about German armored divisions? Mamie, years of therapy—and okay, golf—helped me face the truth.") But age-of-rehab platitudes are Clinton boilerplate, an idiom he slips into as easily as Jean Harlow into a negligee; long before he switched roles from therapist-in-chief to patient, he always was our first Oprah President. At another level, his already famous flapdoodle about his "parallel lives"—didn't we use to just call them public and private ones?—ends up as the most preposterously overscaled rationalization for getting some at the office that your eyes will ever glaze over at. As I'm sure Oprah herself knows, even if—not unlike New York's junior senator—she's much too canny to let on, millions of men from happy, well-adjusted backgrounds have cheated on their wives, and plenty from messy ones are models of fidelity. Even granting that the young Clinton's insecure upbringing and alcoholic stepfather probably did teach him to compartmentalize in all the wrong places, his seeming frankness in confronting this only proves he hasn't lost the knack. It's not just that those little-boy-lost early traumas turn out to explain Monica Lewinsky, reassuring us that he, if not she, didn't actually enjoy their trysts. In a brilliant displacement, Monica—and, by implication, his other marital imbroglios—is virtually *all* they explain, distracting us from inconveniently recalling that our narrator's instincts for duplicity, bluff, and untrustworthy trimming didn't surface only in his sex life. They surfaced in his policy.

This artful separation of what was actually perfectly consistent behavior into bogus antipodes is why *My Life's* therapeutic grid is pure scaffolding, about as meaningful as the little backdrop mantras (for example, "Strong American Communities") that Clinton's White House made a staple of presidential speeches. You can tell that the author has to struggle to remind himself he's



JOHN CUNEO

tormented; compared with confident, and-the-ship-sails-on Bill, his nineties media cousin O.J. seems racked by Kierkegaardian agonies. Early on, Clinton alerts us to “the deeper, constant anger I kept locked away,” showing typ-

ical shrewdness in his choice of character failings. Anger, after all, is a rugged sort of flaw—lots more noble than, say, the itch for self-indulgence of an ex-fat kid eager to make up for lost time. Yet the adolescent Clinton apparently did

such a heroic job of suppressing the rage seething inside him that not one incident he describes bears out its existence; a junior high-schooler whose most rebellious recorded act was to surreptitiously donate part of his allowance to Billy Graham’s crusade wasn’t exactly gearing up to be played by James Dean. Indeed, why this had to be kept secret from his parents, or anyone, isn’t clear.

By then young Bill has faced a painful truth: “I was not destined to be liked by everyone, usually for reasons I couldn’t figure out.” (Um—because you were Eddie Haskell? Because in eighth grade wanting to be liked by *everyone* is the sure sign of an operator?) Undaunted, he soldiers—well, maybe another verb would come in handy here—civilians on to Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service and to part-time work for Senator J. William Fulbright, at which point Vietnam rumbles, a Rhodes scholarship beckons, and his draft dilemma looms. Time to amp up those inner demons for a cameo; as “the deepest recesses of my internal life” start bubbling like the La Brea tar pits, Bill peers and shudders: “It was dark down there.” Too dark to see much, in fact, which is why—La Brea having served its purpose—he breezily forgets all about this theme for the next several hundred pages. As now-it-can-be-told candor goes, it’s fair enough for him to conclude that he’ll never be sure whether “my aversion to going [to Vietnam] was rooted in conviction or cowardice.” But whereas many of his contemporaries who made the same choice now live with the same ambiguity, a surprising number of them are able to explain it without resorting to preliminary voodoo dances about their childhood pathologies.

To make his therapeutic schema stick, Clinton has also had to force his childhood into the familiar dysfunctional-family mold—a mold that, on inspection, is revealingly leaky. You don’t doubt that the loss of his real father before Bill was born left a gap, or that coping with stepdad Roger Clinton’s binges was no picnic. But the cat he’s unmistakably struggling to keep bagged is that influence-wise, neither Gone Dad nor

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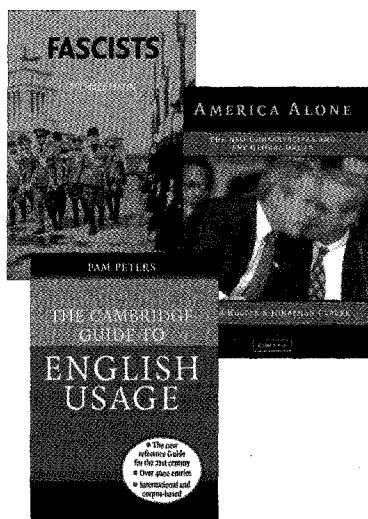
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Fake Dad was a match for that embodiment of the pleasure principle, Virginia (Cassidy, Blythe, Clinton, Dwire) Kelley—good-time gal, unrepentant gambling addict, and staunch believer in working hard and playing by her own rules. He doesn't want us to look at her too closely, since these qualities sound suspiciously familiar. Besides, admitting that the dominant figure of his early years was a headstrong, sexy dame who gave her supposedly damaged son the confidence of an aircraft carrier would bring his whole parallel-lives house of cards crashing down. Nonetheless, the only passage in *My Life* with any erotic tingle is Clinton's recollection of watching, entranced, as his mother put on her makeup, brushed her hair, painted on her nonexistent eyebrows. The latter detail makes you wonder irresistibly whether, as President, he ever felt a Freudian frisson around Dick Gephardt.

Despite the pasted-in thesis, the Young Clinton stuff is by miles the most beguiling part of the book. The Boomer Americana is attractive, the rise of the ambitious provincial to the big leagues has a built-in Stendhalian appeal, and the writing's garrulity carries you along—even if Clinton's best stories are ruined by his insistence on turning every good anecdote into another job qualification. When he vividly describes a little girl named Mitzi who drove him crazy by hollering "Billy sucks a bottle! Billy sucks a bottle!" while swinging "so high on her swing set the poles of the frame would come up out of the ground," we've got to be not only filled in that Mitzi was "developmentally disabled"—not the term in vogue in 1950s Arkansas, I'd bet—but also assured that "when I pushed to expand opportunities for the disabled as governor and President," she was often on his mind. I liked her better on the swing, but some of the foreshadowing is fun; we learn, for instance, that young Bill's favorite movie was *High Noon*.

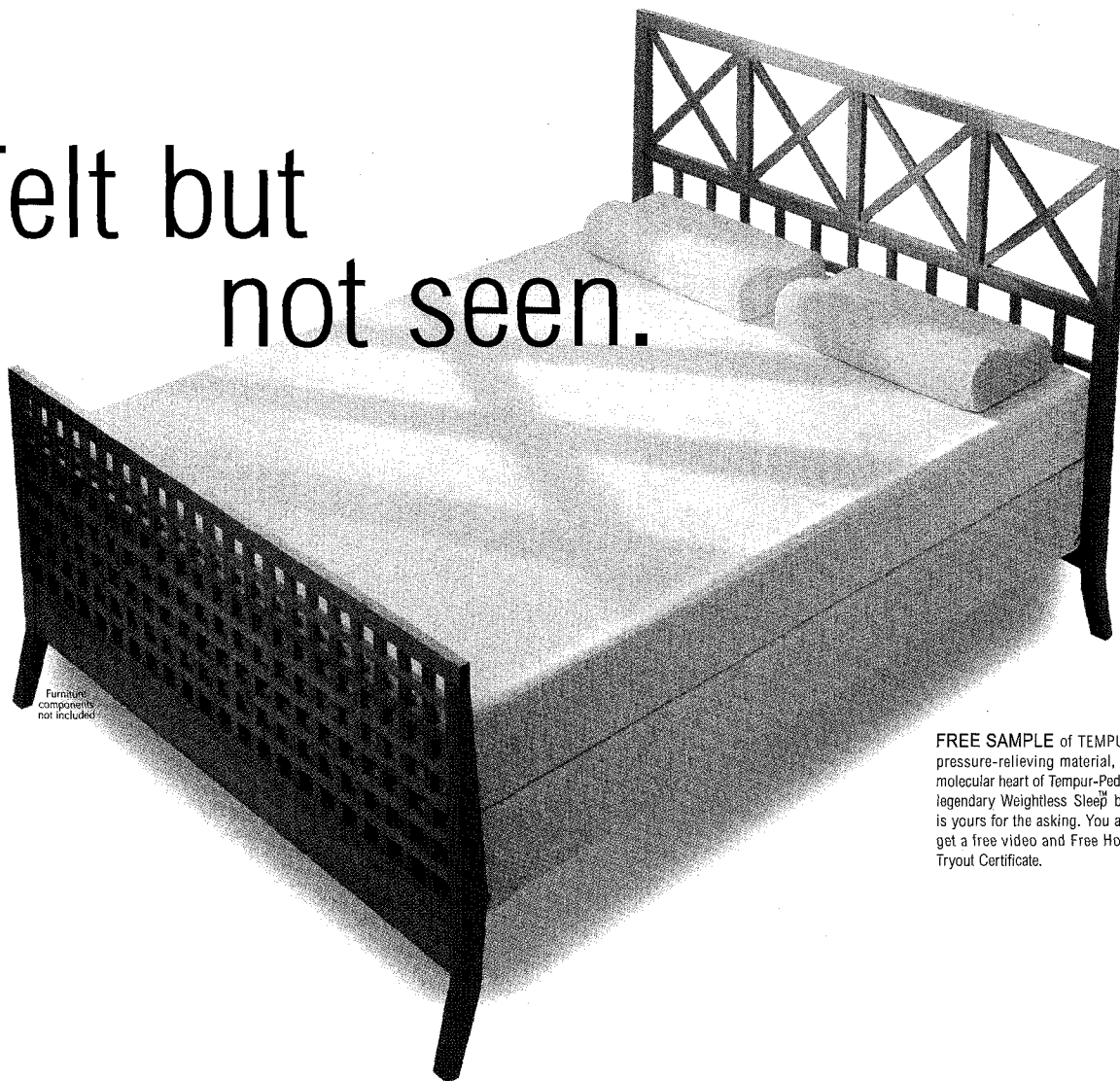
If only he'd left it at that. A memoir that stopped at Yale Law and his courtship of Hillary—which is when it starts dawning on *My Life's* readers that there are 750 pages to go—would have both charmed the public and been a cinch

for a movie sale. (Saluted long before she actually appears, Hillary, by the way, is simply and grandly "Hillary" from the start; the Titania-and-Oberon aspect of this is delightful.) Although he characteristically doesn't realize how funny it is, Clinton even provides the perfect fade-out: "I still remember sitting in front of the fire on a cold winter day as Hillary and I read Vincent Cronin's biography of Napoleon together."

On to Marengo, you crazy kids. Yet once Hillary breaks her feminist classmates' hearts by agreeing to move to Arkansas, and her hubby the young law prof steps onto the public stage (losing a race for Congress, winning one for state attorney general, becoming governor at thirty-two), the saga, instead of gaining momentum, turns first puzzlingly and then punishingly dull. Despite his willingness to recite the nuts and bolts of seemingly every piece of legislation he pushed through, Clinton does dispose of his decade-plus in Little Rock—have you noticed how the former President *loves* going back there?—in a scant 150 pages. Yet it's still a glut of tedium—too many sentences and even paragraphs in the riveting vein of "By 1987, the number of our school districts had dropped to 329, and 85 percent of the districts had increased their property-tax rates." As you wade through the gubernatorial years, the real reason for your sinking feeling is the suspicion that the White House narrative will be another long march through Bill's desk diary on a much vaster scale. And until Monica's winged chariot comes hurrying—or flapping—near, it is.

In between comes the 1992 campaign, raising your hopes briefly; there's no way he can make that great roller-coaster ride uninteresting. Triumphant over the odds again, he does. From Gennifer Flowers and *60 Minutes* to Ross Perot playing Rumpelstiltskin and George H.W. Bush fatally glancing at his watch in mid-debate, Election '92 was the kind of campaign political junkies swoon at—a soap opera with consequences, always their ideal of fun. But perhaps because he shares America's hunch that only a sociopath could have withstood its pressures and

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he has a vested interest in presenting himself as sane, however drearly, the man who starred in most of its dramas makes golf commentators sound wild-eyed. "With four nights of television coverage, the convention would either strengthen our position or undermine it," he explains, displaying the savvy that only a lifetime on the hustings can give. Pining for *Primary Colors* from Mr. Blue State's mouth, we settle for small crumbs of malice. Just before New Hampshire the draft-dodger scandal breaks—and George Stephanopoulos "[is] curled up on the floor, practically in tears. He asked if it wasn't time to think about withdrawing." A few scattered mentions aside, exit Stephanopoulos; that's what you get for writing *All Too Human*, shortstop. I do agree it couldn't happen to a nicer guy.

Victory at last. Clearly unaware that his inauguration's vanity frills triggered the first faint "Uh-ohs" among us Bolsheviks, Clinton lingers over its details: the trip to Monticello's magic kingdom, the melted Frost of Maya Angelou's poem, the careful crafting of his forgettable (and forgotten) first inaugural address. Given the ineptitudes that followed—the Nannygate flap over Attorney General-designate Zoe Baird, gays in the military, Whitewater's first stirrings, the Mogadishu debacle—his dawdling is understandable. Tackling the Somalia disaster, he's quick to remind us that the mission there was inherited, and then brings a consoling parallel to mind: "I thought I knew how President Kennedy felt after the Bay of Pigs." Here and elsewhere, delicate Kennedy comparisons are the book's real Harry Potter side; by implication, Clinton is hoping we'll see him as the JFK who lived.

Conscious that *My Life* is appearing in an election year, Clinton avoids critiquing his own party, though he certainly could. Beyond a generalized lament about his crew's "clumsy violations of the Washington culture," he doesn't address how much his Administration's early struggles were exacerbated by Capitol Hill's Democrats—then still in power, fond of it, and undisposed to back the outsider who'd demoted them to the Beltway's

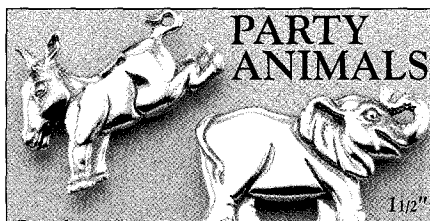
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second most important liberals. It was Democratic defections, after all, that forced more than one vice-presidential tie-breaker vote to get Clinton's budget passed. Since Hillary now occupies Pat Moynihan's seat, it may be no surprise that the way Moynihan's hauteur helped sink the Clintons' overreaching plan for health-care reform doesn't come up. Even Bob Kerrey's grandstanding on the 1993 budget—widely regarded as an ego trip at the time—gets a pass. In dramatic terms, and perhaps politically as well, Clinton actually sounds much happier once Newt Gingrich's 1994 Republican revolution puts the opposition in charge at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, transforming him at a stroke into a beleaguered but valiant lone sheriff facing down a mob.

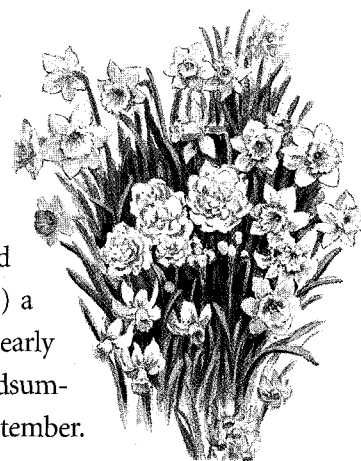
Except for his failure to stop genocide in Rwanda (noted and regretted here, but for less than a full paragraph), the most consequential decision of Clinton's first term was to put deficit reduction first—a market-placating step that effectively scuttled most of his liberal ambitions, creating the centrist Governor of the United States who won re-election at the cost of alienating his party's progressives. Yet nothing in his account here is remotely as self-castigating as the moment in Bob Woodward's *The Agenda* when a frustrated Clinton explodes that he and his team have turned into Eisenhower Republicans: "We stand for lower deficits and free trade and the bond market. Isn't that great?" Although he knows he can't omit the single most craven declaration of a presidency not short on them (it *was* in the State of the Union address, after all), he turns "The era of big government is over" into the beginning of a longer quotation, conveniently eliding the roar of jubilation from the Republican side of the aisle that brought the speech to a halt. Since legacy maintenance beats partisanship any day, he's also noticeably reluctant to call our attention to just how quickly George W. Bush turned his proudest accomplishment—a balanced budget—into quicksand.

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the Whitewater case, the Pandora's box that gave us Ken Starr, a stained blue dress, and impeachment. But this is where the very dreariness of Clinton's number-crunching, detail-munching, oppressively chronological narrative lets him pull off a hat trick. Aside from a rhetorical nod at La Brea ("I was seething inside. No one can be as angry as I was without doing himself harm"), he doesn't mention his dalliances with Monica Lewinsky at the time they occur. Instead his buildup to the 1995 government shutdown, which was when she started bringing him pizza, blooms with encomiums to—what do you know?—Hillary: "I was so proud of her," he writes, soon before his wife leaves on "another trip." For their twentieth wedding anniversary he gives her the engagement ring he couldn't afford in 1975: "Through all our ups and downs," this chapter ends, "we were still very much engaged." It's up to the alert reader to recall who else he was up and down with around then, since "Lewinsky, Monica" appears only when Starr exposes the affair, a hundred pages later. "Finally, after years of dry holes, I had given them something to work with," Clinton bitterly comments—a sentence his editor, Robert Gottlieb, or perhaps New York's junior senator, might have urged him to rethink.

Of course, though *My Life's* star will always be the last person to understand this, the Clinton years, with all their alarums and excursions, were basically a comedy. "I judge my presidency primarily in terms of its impact on people's lives," he writes in conclusion, and it's a sentiment not even Monica could disagree with. And yet so little of it has lasted. Under other circumstances it's conceivable he could have been a great President, but he ended up presiding over an interregnum—our ten-year vacation between the Cold War's end and 9/11. Although you'd never guess it from this book, one of the best things about his two terms was how sheerly entertaining they were. As for the rest, if he ever wonders what his real legacy has been, we don't. Over to you, Titania. ■

Tom Carson is a columnist for GQ and the author of Gilligan's Wake (2003), a novel.

BOOKS

Mother of All Mothers

The leadership secrets of Kim Jong Il

BY B. R. MYERS

You've just finished your life's work, a bold new history of the Watergate burglary in which you manage to prove that the White House was out of the loop, but the ink is hardly dry when an eighteen-minute tape surfaces in a Yorba Linda thrift shop, and soon the whole country is listening to Nixon gangsta-rap about how he *personally* jimmied the door open. It's every revisionist's nightmare, but Bruce Cumings, a history professor at the University of Chicago, has come closest to living it. In a book concluded in 1990 he argued that the Korean War started as "a local affair," and that the conventional notion of a Soviet-sponsored invasion of the South was just so much Cold War paranoia. In 1991 Russian authorities started declassifying the Soviet archives, which soon revealed that Kim Il Sung had sent dozens of telegrams begging Stalin for a green light to invade, and that the two met in Moscow repeatedly to plan the event. Initially hailed as "magisterial," *The Origins of the Korean War* soon gathered up its robes and retired to chambers. The book was such a valuable source of information on Korea in the 1940s, however, that many hoped the author would find a way to fix things and put it back into print.

Instead Cumings went on to write an account of postwar Korea that instances the North's "miracle rice," "autarkic" economy, and prescient energy policy (an "unqualified success") to refute what he calls the "basket-case" view of the country. With even worse timing than its predecessor, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (1997) went on sale just as the world was learning of a devastating famine wrought by Pyongyang's misrule. The author must have wondered if he was snakebit. But now we have a new book, in which Cumings likens North Korea to Thomas More's Utopia, and this time the wrong-headedness seems downright willful; it's as if he were so tired of being made

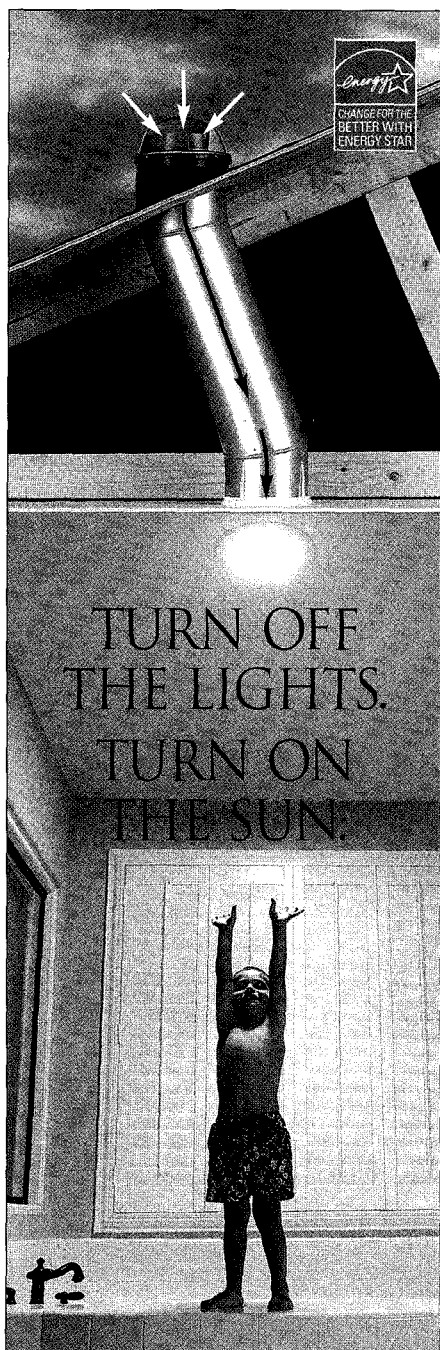
to look silly by forces beyond his control that he decided to do the job himself. At one point in *North Korea: Another Country* (2004) we are even informed that the regime's gulags aren't as bad as they're made out to be, because Kim Jong Il is thoughtful enough to lock up whole families at a time.

on the peninsula nor any new one that may be in the offing. It is perhaps a point worth arguing, particularly in view of the mess in Iraq, but Cumings is too emotional to get the job done. His compulsion to prove conservative opinion wrong on every point inspires him to say things unworthy of any serious historian—that there was no crime in North Korea for decades, for example—and to waste space refuting long-forgotten canards and misconceptions. Half a page is given over to deriding American reporters who once mistook Kim Il Sung's neck growth for a brain tumor—talk about a dead issue.



The mixture of naiveté and callousness will remind readers of the Moscow travelogues of the 1930s, but Cumings is more a hater of U.S. foreign policy than a wide-eyed supporter of totalitarianism. The book's apparent message is that North Korea's present condition can justify neither our last "police action"

Cumings is even harder to take when he's in a good mood. By the time he has noted a vague resemblance between Kim Jong Il and Paul Anka, sniggered about "horny" Korean housewives, and mocked both a tour guide's English and an African man's surname ("I dissolved in hysterics"), most readers, with no



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photograph of the author to go on, will find themselves mentally exchanging his professorial tweeds for a very loud leisure suit. Most offensive of all is the book's message that we shouldn't be too hard on the dictatorship in Pyongyang, because human rights aren't as important to Koreans as to the rest of us.

Does this system promote human freedom? Not from any liberal's standpoint. But from a Korean standpoint, where freedom is also defined as an independent stance against foreign predators—freedom for the Korean nation—here, the vitriolic judgments do not flow so easily. This is a cardinal virtue among a people that has preserved its integrity and continuity in the same place since the early Christian era ... After all, there is one undeniable freedom in North Korea, and that is the freedom to be Korean.

It seems to have slipped the professor's notice that many countries manage to stay independent without dragging children off to gulags, and that North Korea is a place where a lot of characteristically Korean behavior—speaking bluntly, for example—is punishable by execution. The only significant part of the culture that can be freely indulged under Kim is its ethnocentric streak, which is what Cumings all but reduces it to; confusing cause and effect, he sees propaganda as the reflection of the popular soul instead of (to use Stalin's metaphor) the engineer of it. The Korean people have always been more outward-looking than their insecure leaders, and for centuries this was especially true of those in the northern part of the peninsula. Even in the months after our disgraceful bombing campaign during the war—a campaign that Cumings rightly calls a holocaust—diplomats in Pyongyang noted no signs of indiscriminate xenophobia.

This was soon to change. Throughout the 1950s the regime resorted to crude racism in its anti-American propaganda, often treating inset eyes, big noses, and other Caucasian features as the manifestation of villainy. To the

consternation of the diplomatic community, little effort was made to enlighten people about the existence of friendly big-noses, even though—as this spring's Cold War International History Project bulletin makes clear—North Korea's cities were rebuilt and its people fed and cared for with enormous amounts of assistance from Eastern Europe. "They expect foreign countries," one Hungarian diplomat noted, "to give them everything." Reading the CWIHP bulletin has the odd effect of making one realize what a relatively sensible bunch of people the Soviets were. In the mid-1950s they opposed Kim Il Sung's brutal collectivization of agriculture; Kim brushed off their advice, only to

demand food aid when a murderous famine ensued.

The more the regime evinced its incompetence by relying on foreigners, the more it needed to restrict the people's contact with them. By the 1960s the party line had taken a turn that reminded a Soviet diplomat of Nazi Germany, as citizens who married Europeans were banished to the provinces for "crimes against the Korean race." A diplomatic report translated in the CWIHP bulletin shows how the masses finally got into the spirit of things. In

March of 1965 the Cuban ambassador was driving his family and some Cuban doctors around Pyongyang when they stopped to take pictures. Hundreds of adults and children quickly swarmed the diplomatic limousine, pounding it with their fists, tearing the flag off, and ordering the occupants to get out. Their rage and insults, directed mainly at the ambassador "as a black man," abated only when a security force arrived to beat back the mob with rifle butts. (Not for nothing did Eldridge Cleaver say that the North Korean police made him miss the Oakland police.)

"The level of training of the masses is extremely low," a party official later admitted to the ambassador. "They cannot differentiate between friends

NORTH KOREA: ANOTHER COUNTRY

by Bruce Cumings
The New Press

UNDER THE LOVING CARE OF THE FATHERLY LEADER

by Bradley K. Martin
St. Martin's Press

KOREAN ENDGAME

by Selig S. Harrison
Princeton

KIM JONG IL: NORTH KOREA'S DEAR LEADER

by Michael Breen
John Wiley & Sons

and foes." In other words, everything was going as planned. The regime went on to blur the distinction further by excising all mention of outside assistance from the history books, even as it continued to squeeze billions of dollars from its cash-strapped allies. For decades a foreign proletariat toiling in dingy factories from Vladivostok to Karl-Marx-Stadt helped bankroll Pyongyang's transformation into a proud monument to ethnic self-reliance, so that someday a Bruce Cumings could boast that it is anything but the ugly Communist capital one might expect. Well into the 1980s Kim was telling leaders of aid-donating states that he was having trouble meeting the basic needs of his people. If South Korea's dictatorships were America's running dogs, then North Korea was the Eastern bloc's house cat: intractable, convinced of its superiority, and to some observers a more independent creature, but never much good at feeding itself—even after the can openers started falling silent in 1989.

The question of where Europe ends and Asia begins has troubled many people over the years, but here's a rule of thumb: if someone can pose as an expert on the country in question without knowledge of the relevant language, it's part of Asia. Europeans hoping to lay claim to North Korea should therefore brace themselves, because Bradley Martin's publisher is touting *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader* (2004) as the definitive work on its subject, though it belongs squarely in the "a puzzled look crossed the faces of my guide and interpreter" tradition of monoglot scholarship. Although hardly definitive, it is still an excellent book, well researched and lucidly written. It is especially refreshing to find someone showing serious interest in North Korean propaganda instead of merely hooting at it.

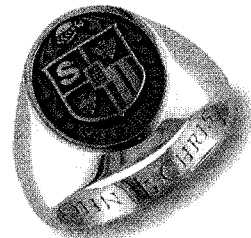
The problem is that the official translations on which Martin was forced to rely do not always reflect the original. Kim Il Sung's title *Eobeoi Suryeong* means not "Fatherly Leader"—a common rendering that encourages Martin to exaggerate the influence of Confu-

JOHN CHRISTIAN

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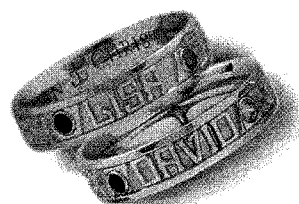
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cianism on the personality cult—but "Parent Leader," the most feminine title the regime could get away with. As the country's visual arts make clear, Kim was more a mother to his people than a stern Confucian patriarch: he is still shown as soft-cheeked and solicitous, holding weeping adults to his expansive bosom, bending down to tie a young soldier's bootlaces, or letting giddy children clamber over him. The tradition continues under Kim Jong Il, who has been called "more of a mother than all the mothers in the world." His military-first policy may come with the title of general, but reports of his endless tour of army bases focus squarely on his fussy concern for the troops' health and comfort. The international ridicule of his appearance is thus as unfair as it is tedious. Anyone who has seen a crowd of Korean mothers waiting outside an examination hall will have no difficulty recognizing Kim's drab parka and drooping shoulders, or the long-suffering face under the pillow-swept perm: this is a mother with no time to think of herself. When it comes to the Workers' Party, the symbolism is even more explicit, as in this recent propaganda poem:

*Ah, Korean Workers' Party, at whose
breast only
My life begins and ends
Be I buried in the ground or strewn
to the wind
I remain your son, and again return to
your breast!
Entrusting my body to your
affectionate gaze,
Your loving outstretched hand,
I cry out forever in the voice of a child,
Mother! I can't live without Mother!*

It's easy to imagine what Carl Jung would have made of all this, and he would have been right. Whereas Father Stalin set out to instill revolutionary consciousness into the masses (to make them grow up, in other words), North Korea's Mother Regime appeals to the emotions of a systematically infantilized people. Although the propaganda may seem absurd at a remove, it speaks more forcefully to the psyche than anything European communism could come up with. As a result, North Korea's political culture has weathered the economic col-

lapse so well that even refugees remain loyal to the memory of Kim Il Sung.

The Yangs, for example, are former Party members who recently defected to the South with their two boys. As part of a campaign to prevent the formation of a refugee ghetto in Seoul, the family was resettled in Mungyeong, a charmless sprawl of apartment blocks and love hotels a few hours to the southeast. I visited them there in May. As we sat on the floor of their tiny living room, I told them how a young refugee once shrank from my approach because—as she later explained—I looked like the stick-nosed Yankee effigies she used to run knives into after school. "Yes, you do have ..." the mother shouted over the general laughter, but she caught herself in time. Turning to the older boy, who is sixteen, I asked what wisdom he could remember from the Parent Leader. "Man is the master of his own destiny," he said shyly, his voice trailing off. What about his parents? "We didn't memorize sentences," the mother said, embarrassed, so I asked her to explain Kim Il Sung's ideology of Juche for me in her own words. "The main thing is, man is the master of his destiny," she said briskly. "And?" I asked. Silence. "Well," I said, "if people are the masters of their destiny, why do they need a leader?" The younger boy came to his mother's aid: "It was something about flowers needing the sun to grow." Everyone frowned at my pen scratching away; they were letting the Parent Leader down. "It wasn't so much what Kim Il Sung said," the father blurted out at last.

This is of course true. Expanses of tautological prose have been ghostwritten to fatten the spines of the two Kims' collected works, but few people ever read them. North Korea is a unique socialist country in that its ruling ideology is conveyed through what is written *about* its leaders, not by them, and the message could hardly be simpler: Foreigners bad, Koreans good, Leader best. "The most important thing to us was that Kim Il Sung suffered for the people; he fought for us," the boys' mother said. With a start I realized that this elegant fortyish woman, who now sells American cosmetics for a liv-

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ing, had tears in her eyes. "The Leader would sit on the ground with farmers, just like we're sitting here now. And if he shook someone's hand, that person would be happy forever. Of course, Kim Jong Il is not like that." Conversation turned to the railway explosion in the North at the end of April, and to the regime's immediate focus on the material damage. "It's because Kim Jong Il never suffered," the father said bitterly. "What does he know about the common people?"

It would appear that Kim knows just enough. The border with China remains so porous that even children often sneak back and forth, and yet no more than three or four percent of the population has chosen to flee for good. The regime obviously did the smart thing by publicly acknowledging the food shortage and then blaming it on American sanctions, instead of pretending there was no food shortage at all, as Stalin used to do. The Dear Leader has also deftly exploited the tradition according to which Koreans care for their parents in old age: the masses are told that it is their job to feed him, not the other way around, and his famed diet of "whatever the troops are eating" is routinely invoked to shame everyone into working harder. Never has a dictator been such an object of pity to his people, or such a powerful source of guilt. In 2003 North Korean cheerleaders, living it up on a rare visit to a sports event in the South, responded to a rain-soaked picture of Kim by bursting into a hysterical lament that baffled their hosts.

To concede the effectiveness of the personality cult is not to agree with Selig S. Harrison's startling assertion, in *Korean Endgame* (2002), that Koreans have a "built-in readiness ... to accept as truth what is dispensed from higher authority." No regime ever needed to subject its citizens to a lifetime of brainwashing in order to make them follow their natural inclinations. What must be acknowledged is that Kim Jong Il has evinced a genius for propaganda ever since managing the efflorescence of his father's cult in the 1960s. Even so, he cannot cover his lack of charisma completely; it's as if Hitler died

and left the Third Reich to Goebbels.

Kim must also be aware that the infantilization of the people has come at a price. Away from Pyongyang's carefully monitored tourist sites, North Korea is a much more raucous place than any dictator could be comfortable with. "One surprising thing," Michael Breen writes in *Kim Jong Il: North Korea's Dear Leader* (2004), "surprising because you expect robots, is ... how frequently fights break out." According to refugees, even women fight out their differences, and young female teachers are said to hit children the hardest. This lack of restraint is a problem for many North Koreans trying to adjust to life in the South. Social workers complain that the refugees pick fights with strangers, and storm off jobs on the first day. "I'd have thought they'd be better at controlling themselves, coming from a socialist system," is a common lament.

In short, the conventional Western view of North Korea's official culture as a stodgy combination of Confucianism and Stalinism—two ideologies that prize intellectual self-discipline above all else—could not be further from the truth. Fortuitously enough, this view has so far encouraged Americans to stay cool in the face of Kim Jong Il's missile-rattling. But misperceptions of hostile regimes are inherently dangerous, especially when Uncle Sam is doing the misperceiving, and this one has as much potential to excite tensions as to reduce them. On August 18, 1976, a detail of U.S. and South Korean soldiers at the DMZ were pruning a tree when People's Army soldiers demanded that they stop. The Americans refused, prompting the North Koreans to wrest away their tools. In the ensuing clash two American officers were killed. Unable to conceive that Communist troops could act out of spontaneous rage, Washington assumed that Kim Il Sung had ordered the incident. Troops were set on high alert, and nuclear-capable B-52s dispatched to skirt North Korean airspace. Luckily for everyone, the Parent Leader issued an apology for his children on August 21. As the Americans saw it, of course, Kim had "backed down."

MARC ROSENTHAL

READING LIST

MIRROR, MIRROR

Astonishing memoirs by (and about) deeply repellent people

BY TERRY CASTLE

Liber Amoris: or, The New Pygmalion, by William Hazlitt (1823). The hilariously squalid (and strangely affecting) record of the great nineteenth-century critic's erotic obsession with his landlady's daughter. Mother and daughter conspired to milk him for everything they could get. No one has written better about falling catastrophically in love with someone you know is completely unworthy of you.

A Disgraceful Affair: Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Bianca Lamblin, by Bianca Lamblin (1996). A Jamesian parable set among Left Bank glitterati. Though not ostensibly written "out of revenge or retaliation," Lamblin's book is in fact a sapphic *J'accuse!* directed at Simone de Beauvoir. In the late 1930s, when Lamblin was a mixed-up *lycée* student, the Turbaned One seduced her ("both intellectually and sexually") and then handed her off—with breathtaking nonchalance—to her lover Sartre. He was just as vile, and not much to look at either. *Quel bordel!*

A Madman's Manifesto, by August Strindberg (1895). Strindberg intended this scabrous roman à clef about his tormented marriage to the actress and feminist Siri von Essen to serve as a suicide note. He got cold feet about killing himself but decided to humiliate her anyway by publishing this devil's banquet of unseemly allegations. (He accused Von Essen of promiscuity, drunkenness, and lesbianism.) A more loathsome yet absorbing example of misogynistic dementia would be hard to find.



Straight Life: The Story of Art Pepper, by Art and Laurie Pepper (1979). An American genius going down the toilet. Some think Pepper the greatest jazz saxophonist after Charlie Parker. His chronicle (dictated to his last wife) of thievery, heroin addiction, balling dumb chicks, and serving five years in San Quentin is a rhapsodic riff on self-destruction. It is also one of the greatest, saddest autobiographies ever written.

Forgotten Fatherland: The Search for Elisabeth Nietzsche, by Ben Macintyre (1992). The intrepid Macintyre took a boat trip into the Paraguayan jungle in 1991 in search of the surviving inhabitants of Nueva Germania—an abortive "Aryan" colony founded in the late nineteenth century by the ghastly Elisabeth Nietzsche, racist sister of the philosopher. He found a weird village of unreconstructed white supremacists—inbred, half mad, many of them still speaking a kind of zombie German—and heard some curious and frightening stories about Josef Mengele. A true-life *Heart of Darkness*.

Terry Castle is a professor of English at Stanford University. Her books include *Noël Coward & Radclyffe Hall: Kindred Spirits* (1996) and *Boss Ladies, Watch Out!: Essays on Women, Sex, and Writing* (2002).

Perhaps the most unsettling thing about the nuclear accord brokered by Jimmy Carter in 1994 is the decade of crowing it set off in North Korea. A high-school textbook remembers, "The Great Leader dragged the Americans, who had fallen into a state of extreme terror and unease, to the negotiating table ... All problems discussed during the talks between America and Korea were resolved to Korea's advantage, and

the intense nuclear standoff ended in our victory." This is evidently sincerely believed; if it weren't, the North Koreans would not still be so enamored of Carter and Robert Gallucci, the chief U.S. negotiator back then. Both men—and this must thrill them no end—are praised in propaganda literature as fervent admirers of Kim Il Sung.

It is reassuring, then, to read in Harrison's book that the agreement

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actually represented a victory of high-ranking North Korean “doves” over their hardline colleagues. I just wish he had explained why even the most hawkish propagandists remember it so fondly. What bothers me more is the author’s insistence on interpreting the two Kims’ every act as part of a rational pursuit of national security. We are told, for example, that the deployment of atomic weapons in South Korea in 1958 frightened Pyongyang into starting its own nuclear program. As the CUIHP bulletin makes clear, however, Eastern European diplomats in the early 1960s were aghast at the North Koreans’ assertions that a nuclear confrontation was nothing to be afraid of, and that the time had come for another invasion of the South. It is by no means certain that this sort of adventurist thinking has been abandoned. In a propaganda novel set in 1993, Kim Jong Il and his generals regard a likely American air strike on the Yongbyon nuclear facility as the perfect opportunity for a “sacred war” (*seongjeon*) of reunification. Harrison ignores such things, which may well be better than overreacting to them; but to approach North Korea as if it were the détente-era Soviet Union is asking for trouble. When he gets his next update on the hawk-dove struggle from officials in Pyongyang, a city where most foreigners count themselves lucky to learn their tour guide’s name, he should perhaps keep in mind that North Korea has always viewed the existence of similar factions in Washington as the manifestation of a ludicrous disunity. No one under Kim Jong Il would describe his government in such terms to a Yankee visitor unless the goal were to extract more concessions from the outside world.

Considering that for decades the North Koreans refused to listen to their own allies, it seems naive for the author of *Korean Endgame* to assume that what Washington does “will largely determine what the North ... will do.” The Juche regime has received substantial U.S. aid since the famine, but the dominant slogans of anti-American propaganda remain “A hundred thousand times revenge” and “A jackal can never

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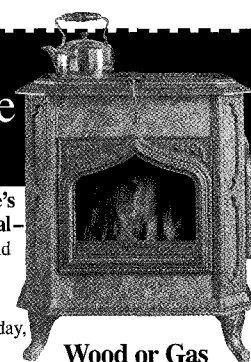
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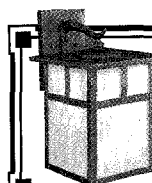
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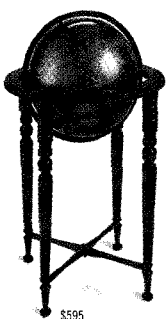
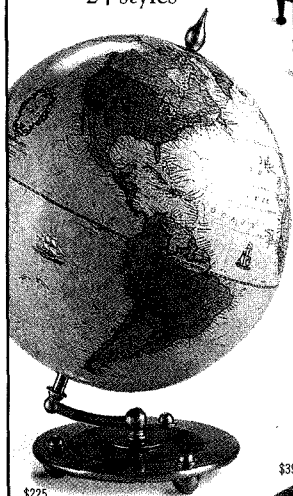
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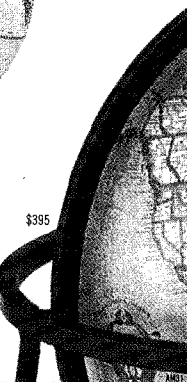
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become a lamb." In other words, even as the regime tells the outside world it wants nothing but better relations with Washington, it tells its own people that better relations are neither desirable nor conceivable. In January of 2003 Pyongyang issued a taunting poster of a missile attack on the Capitol. Later that year, with the six-party talks in progress, an old tale of murderous missionaries was reprinted in four North Korean magazines, complete with racist caricatures.

Still, the thrust of Harrison's book is valid.

The goal of the United States should be to disengage its forces gradually ... over a period not longer than ten years, whether or not this can be done as part of a negotiated arms-control process ... The stage would then be cleared, as it were, with the initiative left to Seoul and Pyongyang. Washington would have its hopes and its advice but would recede into an unaccustomed posture of detachment, ready to let the two actors make their own mistakes.

This is excellent counsel. Far from being a stabilizing factor on the peninsula, the U.S. presence serves only to rally the North Koreans around their military-first government. As Harrison makes clear, this is no time to get sentimental about our old ally. Seoul asks that U.S. troops stay, but at the same time it poses as a neutral mediator of the resulting tensions, often playing down the nuclear threat just as Pyongyang seems bent on playing it up; a disastrous miscommunication among the three parties seems all but preordained. It is a shame that Harrison does not place greater stress on the need to extricate our troops even if the arms-control process fails, because it's hard to see how it can succeed. Kim Jong Il refused to let South Korean doctors tend to blinded children after the North's railway explosion last spring; such a pathologically secretive man must be expected to balk at an early stage in the verification of nuclear dismantlement, no matter what agreement he has signed. Washington will then renege on its part of the bargain, prompting Seoul to voice regret over American "intransigence." This, in turn,

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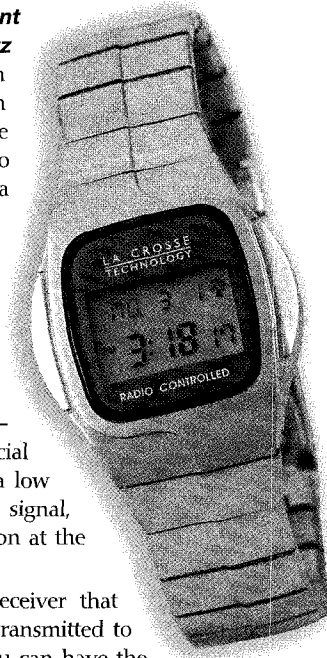
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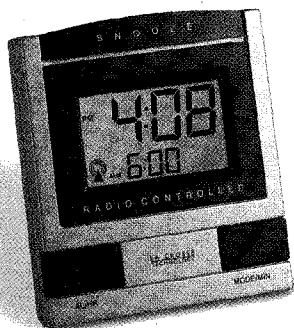
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will embolden the North to demand a re-negotiation of the point in question, and we will all be right back where we started, albeit with even more nukes to worry about.

In the meantime, anything can happen. Having predicted the speedy downfall of the regime back in 1994, Pyongyang-watchers now predict that it will be around forever, but North Korea is already well into a precarious post-totalitarian phase. Thousands of citizens in border regions chat with refugees by smuggled cell phone, and millions more enjoy illegal access to television broadcasts from outside the country. The majority of the population has bought *and* sold things at open-air markets, and many young people in rural areas have simply stopped attending school and political meetings. The personality cult will find it hard to adjust to this kind of change without routine recourse to anti-American alarmism, and if there are no grounds for confrontation, Kim Jong Il can be expected to create them. All the more reason, then, for America to heed Harrison's advice and pull out. But will we do so? Our patriotic dash into the Iraqi quagmire hardly inspires confidence that we wouldn't follow our own Dear Leader into a new conflict in North Korea, especially since the WMD really do look like a "slam dunk" this time.

The only comfort to be had from the new batch of Korea books is provided by Breen's biography of Kim Jong Il, which details a hedonistic streak as wide as the DMZ. Apparently the dictator lives in a huge palace stocked with Paradis cognac, and every summer a fresh "Joy Brigade" of high school beauties gets to admire the ceiling. Breen waxes indignant about this, but would he rather Kim were sharing a tent with a mountain goat and a well-thumbed Koran? We can all breathe a little easier knowing that our most formidable adversary wants his virgins in the here and now. **A**

B. R. Myers is the author of Han Sorya and North Korean Literature (1994) and A Reader's Manifesto (2002), a portion of which first appeared in the July/August 2001 Atlantic. He is currently teaching North Korean studies at Korea University, in South Korea.

BOOKS

The Immortal

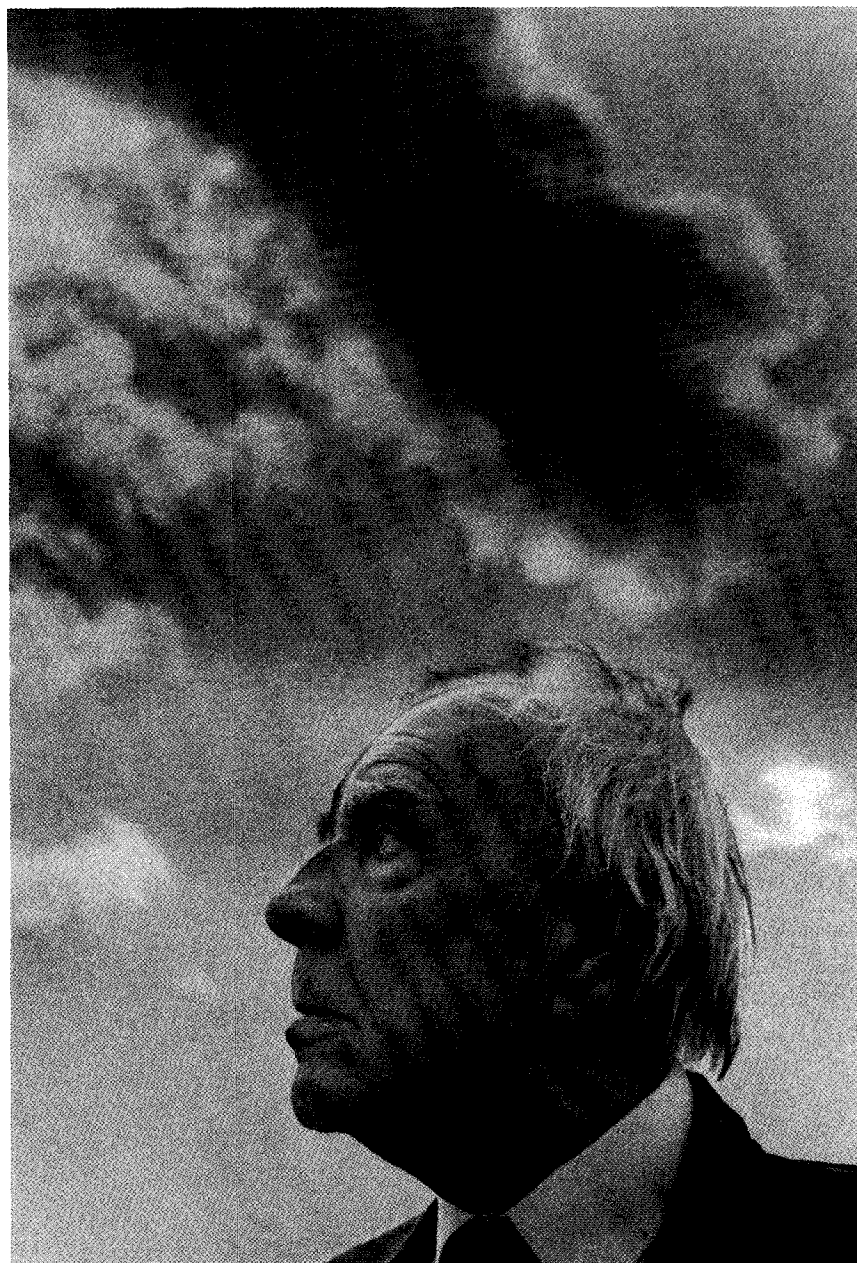
A new biography reaches the heart of the labyrinth—the intense and wondrous life of Jorge Luis Borges

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In early 1925, in a literary magazine in Buenos Aires called *Proa* ("Prow"), which he had helped to found, Jorge Luis Borges wrote an essay called "El *Ulises* de Joyce." He would then have been just twenty-five years old, and was anxious to boast of being "the first Hispanic adventurer to have arrived at Joyce's book." Far from content with this avant-garde claim, he evolved the further ambition to do for his native Buenos Aires what Joyce had done for Dublin, and to weave from its slums and boulevards the lineaments of a universal city. On the centennial of Leopold Bloom's epic meanderings this is a delightful coincidence to come upon if you believe—but cannot perhaps quite prove—that there is something universal about literature, too, and that unforgiving Time, as Auden said in farewell to Yeats, nonetheless "Worships language and forgives / Everyone by whom it lives."

In this altogether first-rate biography, Edwin Williamson identifies another element in Joyce that kindled an answering spark in Borges. The Irish, Borges wrote, "have always been famous agitators of the literature of England." Might it not be possible, then, that a young writer in Spanish, in a Spanish ex-colony at the other end of the world, could also raise a body of work that would resonate in the wider tongue, and bring the local practice of letters one step beyond the national, the folkloric, and the epic?

Had he cared to do so, Williamson could have pressed the analogy a little further. Like Joyce, Borges was never quite at ease with his countrymen, and was permanently at odds with the Roman Catholic Church. Like Joyce, he was immured within an increasingly untreatable blindness. He was fascinated by Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon

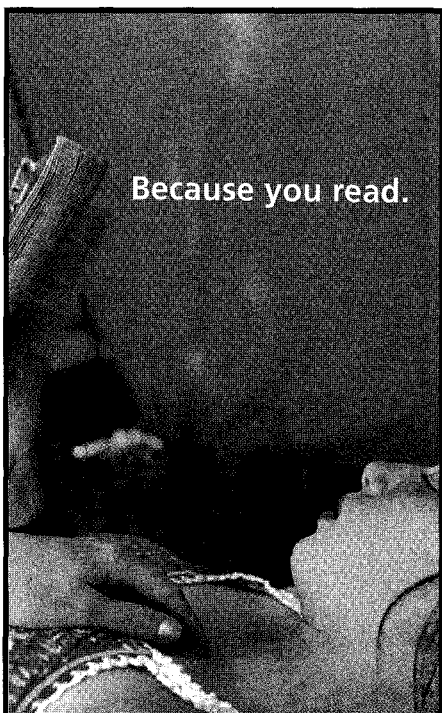


**BORGES:
A LIFE**
by Edwin Williamson
Viking

philology. He is buried in Switzerland, which he loved and where he died. He even had a tempestuous girlfriend named Norah. But with the ostensibly negligible difference made by that single, redundant, non-aspirate *h*—a Borgesian micro-element of distinction between his own adored object and Nora Barnicle—the parallels would begin to diverge. Borges did not have even a hundredth of Joyce's libido. And he had been cursed with the opposite of Joyce's family problem: he had a somewhat weak and futile father and a mother who just would not quit. The father made the decision to send him, on or around his nineteenth

birthday, to a brothel in Geneva. This was a course of action that, we can be sure, Joyce could and would have decided on for himself; but the effect on a sensitive boy who could not quite rise to the occasion appears to have been lifelong and disabling. (It put me in mind of the narrator of Robertson Davies's *Deptford Trilogy*, a much less tender figure who is quite as thoroughly nauseated by the same paternal notion of what constitutes *un rite de passage*.)

Joyce had to struggle for his cosmopolitanism, and indeed for his philo-Semitism, which were in Borges's case innate. As well as Spanish-Argentine



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lineage, Borges had a grandmother called Fanny Haslam, than which I suppose there could be no more English name outside the pages of Jane Austen; and she made sure to rear him (as he once told me) so that he spoke both tongues before he could become aware of any distinction between them. His first immersion was in the literature of Anglophilia, from Stevenson to Shakespeare. The name Borges is originally Portuguese, and this Lusitanian-Brazilian blood was commingled through another branch of the family tree with that of an Italian Jew named Suárez. Buenos Aires has always had ethnic neighborhoods, principally Italian and German and Jewish, on which the grandeur of Spanish conquest and the aloofness of a British merchant-and-rancher colonial class are superimpositions. Someone had to be born to whom this was a natural and also appealing state of affairs—someone to whom the Babel of discrepant languages and cultures was not chaos but, rather, the design for an eventually imposing but also microscopically intricate tower.

Williamson lays stress on the word *criollo*, which in Argentina is cognate with “Creole” without having at all the same meaning. It signifies an Argentine of inarguably Spanish descent, and it mixes this definition of ethno-linguistic security with the more uncertain pursuit of a distinctly “Argentine” identity. For Borges, taking up this cultural ambiguity meant trying for a specific national literature that could nonetheless be valuable and intelligible to non-Argentines. Taking up the same ambiguity in its political form involved a belief in democracy and in local vernaculars and idioms. Yet, as Joyce himself found when the Irish repudiated his beloved Parnell, a democrat and republican can sometimes find himself sickened by public opinion. A version of this irony was to break Borges’s heart.

Given the somewhat conservative demeanor that he had adopted by the time he became globally celebrated, it is fascinating to find just how much Borges in his earlier years was prepared to stake on radical and modernist positions. He came onto the stage almost like an extra in Tom Stoppard’s

Travesties, in which James Joyce converges with Lenin and the Dadaist Tristan Tzara in Zurich. He welcomed the Russian Revolution, made lifelong friendships with Swiss Marxist Jews, took part in Surrealist and Expressionist masquerades, and shuttled between Europe and Latin America. In 1928 he gave a public address in Buenos Aires in which he told his fellow *criollos* to integrate.

In this house which is America, my friends, men from various nations of the world have conspired together in order to disappear in a new man, who is not yet embodied in any one of us and whom we shall already call an “Argentine” so as to begin to raise our hopes. This is a confederacy without precedent: a generous adventure by men of different bloodlines whose aim is not to persevere in their lineages but to forget those lineages in the end; these are bloodlines that seek the night. The *criollo* is one of the confederates. The *criollo*, who was responsible for creating the nation as such, has now chosen to be one among many.

As far as was possible, Borges remained true to this loftily expressed ambition. He argued earnestly about the national epic *The Gaucho Martín Fierro*, which is to Argentina—though it boasts a far more “accessible” demotic appeal—what the sagas are to Iceland or *Beowulf* is to Anglo-Saxon England. That the lone gaucho might be the nation’s emblematic figure—a Robin Hood or a Daniel Boone—Borges was happy to concede. But that such a person—unscrupulous, untied by any social obligation, and thirsty for murder and spoils—should be the model citizen was a bit more debatable.

This may be the moment to say that Borges’s repeated fascination with tigers, knife fighters, daredevils, and solitary horsemen, some of it passed on from his stiff-necked *criollo* mother, has a tinge of the vicarious about it, and strikes the only faintly inauthentic note in his fiction. It corresponds, probably not all that obliquely, to his oft manifested wince of fascinated disgust at sexual relations. In his intense story “The Cult of the Phoenix,” for example, the initiates are wedded to lubricity and, indeed, “slime” (*légame*), and the

penny will drop for most readers long before Borges closes by saying,

On three continents I have merited the friendship of many worshipers of the Phoenix; I know that the Secret at first struck them as banal, shameful, vulgar and (stranger still) unbelievable. They could not bring themselves to admit that their parents had ever stooped to such acts ... Someone has even dared to claim that by now it is instinctive.

Williamson permits himself a rare lapse into the dead-literal by noting with solemnity that "years later Borges would tell Ronald Christ that he meant the Secret to refer to sexual intercourse." Perhaps the name of this interlocutor was irresistible ...? Incidentally, I have taken the quotation above, and also the title of the story, from Andrew Hurley's translation. Some may prefer Norman Thomas di Giovanni's version, "The Sect of the Phoenix." It sometimes amazes

of Peronism lay in its demagogic dexterity: it was at once anti-oligarchic, anti-Jewish, and anti-English. By persecutions large and small—he lost his job at a library; his mother and sister were briefly imprisoned; "elitist" magazines and clubs were peremptorily closed down—Borges became persuaded that the masses who applauded this kind of thing were not to be trusted. Every time Perón fell or was exiled, the crowd yelled for him to come back. And in the sordid figure of his whorish wife Eva (or "Evita") all the brothels and tango bars, all the popular culture of the city, allied to all the suspect *machismo* of the *Martín Fierro* ballad tradition, underwent a horrid mutation into the philistine, the greedy, and the cruel. Borges's story "Ragnarök," about false gods and the need to destroy them, is very probably derived from his contempt for the votaries of such idols.

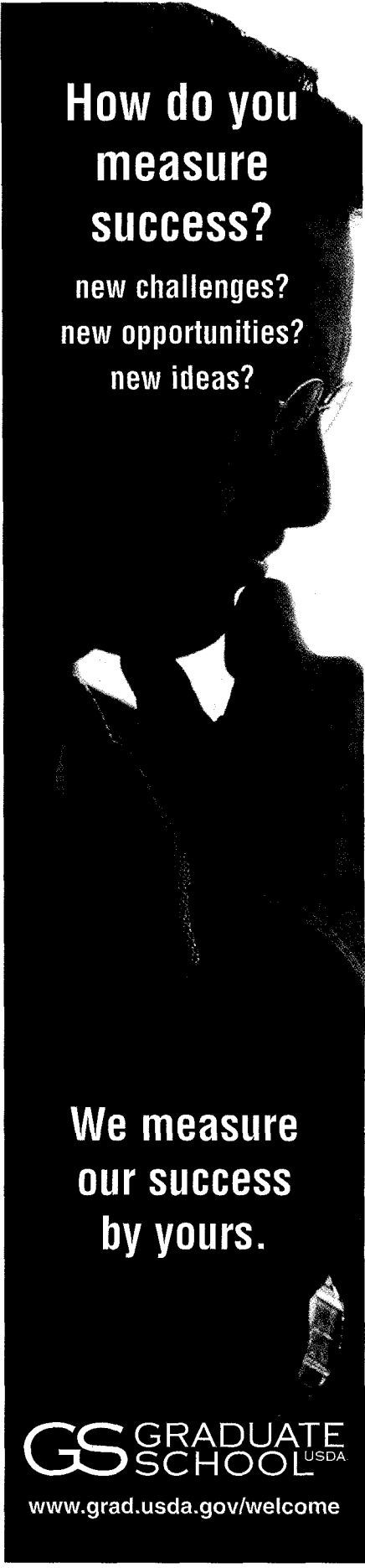
Jorge Luis Borges evolved the ambition to do for his native Buenos Aires what James Joyce had done for Dublin, and to weave from its slums and boulevards the lineaments of a universal city.

me that Borges, with his immaculate English, felt he needed a dragoman at all. But who would not have desired the job?

Keeping up his cultural optimism about Argentina in public, and spending ever more of his private and literary life in codexes and codicils, Babels and Babylons, lotteries and labyrinths, Borges postponed for some time the disagreeable realization that his country and his culture were turning against him. In the 1930s he took a bold position against the local version of fascism while simultaneously distrusting and even disliking the great cats of the Hispanic literary "left," Pablo Neruda and Federico García Lorca, both of whom paid notable visits to Buenos Aires. Williamson suggests persuasively that there was an element of sexual envy involved in this too. But no such considerations would have influenced Borges in the detestation he felt for Juan Perón, and the fear that he experienced as he witnessed the birth of a raw, localist populism. The foul genius

Perón, like Franco and Salazar, survived the supposed defeat of fascism in the Second World War, and he kept on torturing Argentina with his revenant third and fourth acts, ultimately dying and then ruling by posthumous proxy through the cult of his dead wife and the actual agency of his second one, the charmless Isabel. At a point in the mid-1970s the armed forces decided to put a stop to all this, and to much else besides, by an employment of the mailed fist. So when I called on Jorge Luis Borges in his upstairs apartment, 6B at Calle Maipú 994, just off the Plaza San Martín, in December of 1977, the streets of the city were being prowled by death squads.

The inscription on Edgar Allan Poe's door at the University of Virginia—"Domus parva magni poetae" ("Small home of a great poet")—would have been almost perfectly apt for the tiny quarters in which Borges and his tireless mother had for so long resided. But, no less aptly, the place was lined and



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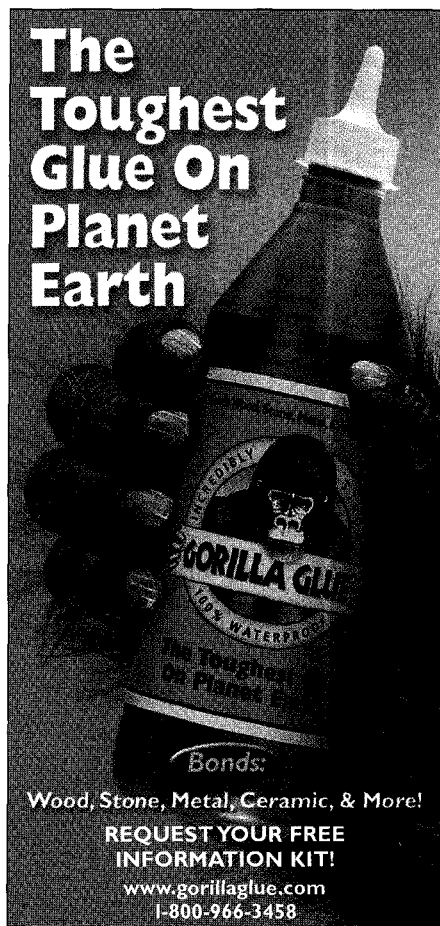
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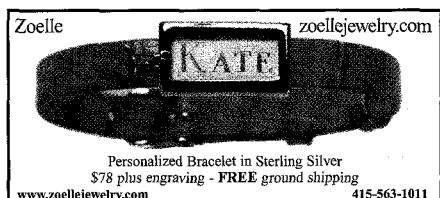
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piled with volumes, and the blind old man seemed to know the location of every one of them. He liked my English voice, and asked me if I would do him the courtesy of reading aloud (I later discovered, without chagrin, that he did this to a lot of visitors). Pointing to where a Kipling anthology could be found, he asked me to begin with "Harp Song of the Dane Women." "And please, read it slowly. I like to take long, long sips."

This lovely and stirring poem is made up almost entirely of Anglo-Norse words (and, incidentally, there is no way to read it fast). He told me that he'd taken up the study of Old English in 1955, when he went blind, and that "increasing blindness helped me to write 'The Library of Babel.'" Language in any permutation was a subject for which he showed immediate enthusiasm. "Do you know that in Mexico they say 'I am seeing you' when they mean 'I will see you'? I find the translation of the present into the future very ingenious." Without the smallest appearance of affectation, he said that reverse and obverse were always the same to him, "which is why I find infinity almost banal," and that in his dreams he was always "lost"—"hence perhaps my interest in labyrinths."

His shy invitation to return on the morrow and read further from his library was at once the mildest and the most imperative request I have ever received. Later leading him slowly downstairs, and across the perilous traffic to La Ciudad for lunch, I felt as if I had been entrusted with a unique coin or ancient palimpsest or precious astrolabe. (What if I tripped and took him down with me? It would be scant consolation to reflect that such a calamitous narrative would contain all other potential narratives: I was Anglo-Saxon enough to see myself being stuck with the *ur-one*.) Whatever I read, he commented on. "Kipling was not really appreciated in his own time because all his peers were socialists." "Chester-ton—such a pity he became a Catholic!" When I queried his rather stilted praise for Neruda, he admitted that he preferred Gabriel García Márquez. (In 1926 Borges had written an essay, "Tales of Turkestan," praising stories in



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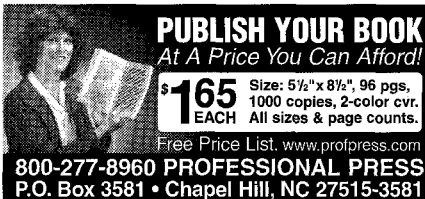
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which “the marvelous and the everyday are entwined ... there are angels as there are trees.” In “The Postulation of Reality” (1931) he declared that fiction was “an autonomous sphere of corroborations, omens and monuments,” as demonstrated by the “predestined *Ulysses* of Joyce.” Along with so-called “magic realism,” this prefigures the realistic magic of his “*Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*”—another work that it is highly inadvisable to read in a hurry.)

The enduring rapture with magic and fable has always struck me as latently childish and somehow sexless (and thus also related to childlessness). But “*Orbis Tertius*” (“Third World”) had another, less innocent and more concrete meaning in those days, symbolizing the grainy and harsh battles of urban guerrillas against the metropole. Buenos Aires was the scene of such combat as we spoke: it was impossible to avoid the subject. Borges placidly replied with a couplet from Edmund Blunden: “This was my country and it might be yet, / But something came between us and the sun.” That something, he left me in no doubt, had been Peronism. As for the generals and admirals who had seized power—he sounded like an Evelyn Waugh impersonator (“the sword of honor” is a frequent reference in his work) when he announced that it was better to have a government “of gentlemen rather than pimps.” Seizing the occasion to elucidate the specific Buenos Aires dockland slang for “pimp,” which is *canfinflero* (a term of almost untranslatable—or do I mean too easily translatable?—obscenity), he discoursed with some warmth about his enthusiasm for dictatorship. (Re-reading my notes of our conversation today, and knowing now about that shriveling moment in the Geneva brothel, I wonder if the flesh trade had a special horror for him.) When he invited me back for the following day, I had to decline, with real regret, because I was taking an early plane to Chile. At this he asked me with perfect gravity if I would be calling on General Pinochet, and hearing my answer in the negative, expressed regret in his turn, adding, “A true gentleman. He was kind enough to present me with

a literary award when I last visited his country.”

Edwin Williamson’s biography passes what I consider to be a small but by no means paltry test. It is absolutely solid wherever it can be checked against this reviewer’s knowledge. In particular it brought back to me with extraordinary vividness the vertiginous shifts in feeling that I experienced during those two Borgesian days of languorous conversation, attentive reading, and sheer alarm. Moreover, the book shows with great care and fairness what had brought Borges to this pass. The world now knows, and some of us knew even then, that the regime of General Videla, too, was depraved by violence and corruption, and was viciously anti-English and pathologically anti-Semitic. As for the *canfinflero* question: Henry Kissinger’s old confrere Videla is now in prison for his part in selling the babies of the rape victims he held in secret prisons—something a little rawer than mere “pimping.”

At our lunch Borges joked a bit about his failure to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. (“Though when you see who *has* had it ... Shaw! Faulkner! Still, I would grab it. I feel greedy.”) In another context he described the sport of denying him the prize as “a minor Swedish industry.” Williamson shows that by his defense of Videla and especially Pinochet, and his public attack on the memory of García Lorca during a visit to post-Franco Spain, Borges was almost willfully denying himself the laureateship. That was a measure of how distraught he felt about chaos and subversion in Argentina. Thus it speaks doubly well of him that before the dictatorship fell, he signed a statement of concern about the *desaparecidos* (“disappeared”) and wrote a sardonic poem lampooning the mad war of grandiose and futile aggression launched by the generals against the Falkland Islands.

If there is a key story in Borges, as Williamson seems to imply, it may be contained in or near *The Aleph*. Much of his work led up to this collection, and much depends on it. In one of the tales within—“The Immortal”—we come upon this:

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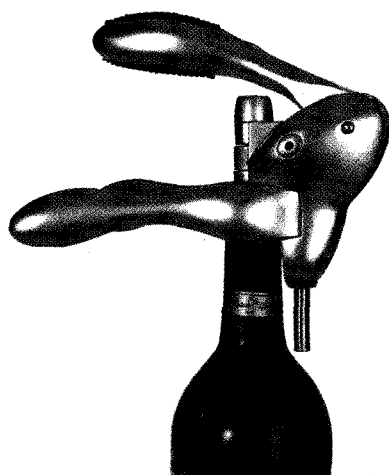


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There is nothing very remarkable about being immortal; with the exception of mankind, all creatures are immortal, for they know nothing of death. What is divine, terrible, and incomprehensible is *to know* oneself immortal. I have noticed that in spite of religion, the conviction as to one's own immortality is extraordinarily rare. Jews, Christians, and Muslims all *profess* belief in immortality, but the veneration paid to the first century of life is proof that they truly believe only in those hundred years, for they destine all the rest, throughout eternity, to rewarding or punishing what one did *when alive*.

It is this capacity, I believe, that promotes Borges so far above the level of the exotic antiquarian, the obsessed bibliophile, the cloistral mapmaker, the crazed pedant, and the unreliable editor: diverting roles that he vastly enjoyed and at which he excelled. So often one comes across a passage as

For Borges, the Babel of discrepant languages and cultures in Buenos Aires was not chaos but, rather, the design for an eventually imposing but also microscopically intricate tower.

perfectly cut and honed as that one, uttered with a certain diffidence and yet—as is frequent with perfectionists—the product of much silent labor, reflection, and, I might add, stoicism.

When his yearning heart and brain were not engaged with the Vikings and the gauchos, or the equally heroic explorers and cartographers of the New World, Borges would turn again and again to the shaded stone arbors of Córdoba and Baghdad and ancient Persia. He was evidently magnetized by the great scholars and reasoners of the Andalusian renaissance, as they sought to peer beyond the veils of clerical dogma. (His love for Fitzgerald and Omar Khayyam makes the same point in a different fashion; how marvelous that he praised Fitzgerald's "indolence and tenacity.") Other fascinations—with the Jewish Prague of Kafka and also of the *golem*—manifest the same commitment to cities that are at once authentic and imaginary. If Borges could have drawn at all, he would have wanted to fuse Piranesi with Escher. It was not by

chance that one of his absolutely favorite critics was F. H. Bradley, the author of *Appearance and Reality*.

Borges may have secretly wanted a happy ending, and certainly appears to have secretly planned for one. Having survived a number of inconclusive courtships and a null marriage, all under the vulturelike surveillance of his mother, he managed at the end to form some kind of alliance with María Kodama, a devoted young half-Japanese student of his work who was, like him, a "seeker," albeit a more amateur one. His subsequent interest in Shintoism and Buddhism lacks the mordancy and introspection (the "agony of inwit," as Joyce liked to put it) of his earlier hermeneutic investigations. At a certain point talk about "essence" and "oneness" and the universal becomes more tautological than inquisitive. But Borges did live to be honored eventually by a democratic Argentina; did finally

get some time to himself with a girl of his own choosing; and did ultimately elect to arrive in Geneva and to surprise Kodama by telling her with decision that he wouldn't leave again. Thus he managed to cancel—I should probably say "exorcise"—his adolescent humiliation in that city, and some of the disappointments of his maturity as well. His lengthy examination of his own life, one undevoutly hopes, had proved it to be worth living. Long before, F. H. Bradley had provided Borges with a reflection that is exactly right, in that it promises more than it delivers: "For love unsatisfied the world is a mystery, a mystery which satisfied love appears to understand." ■

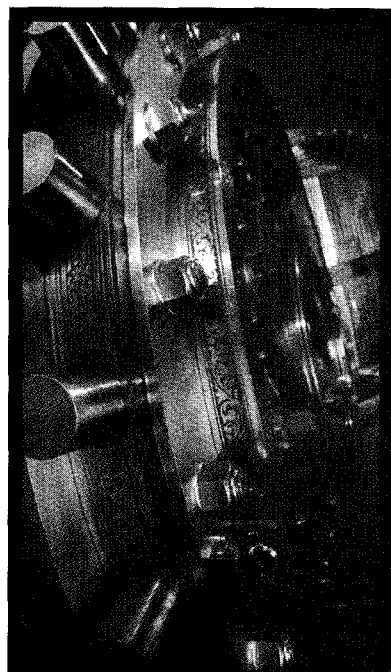
Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair.

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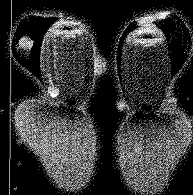
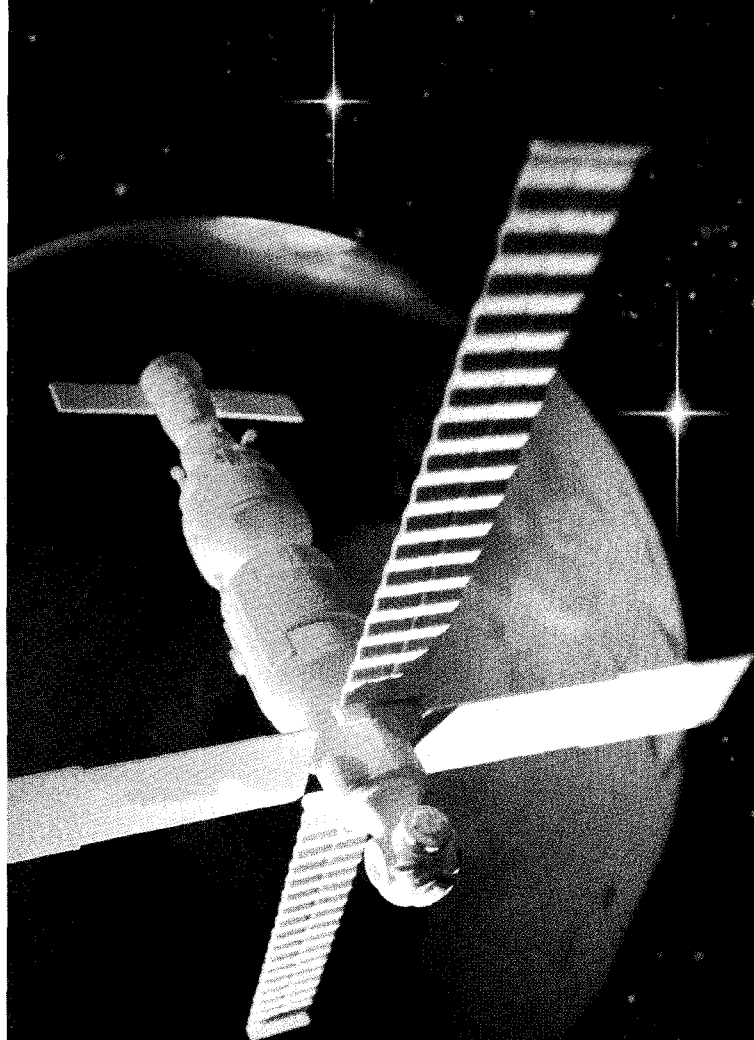


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Coping with the sixteenth minute

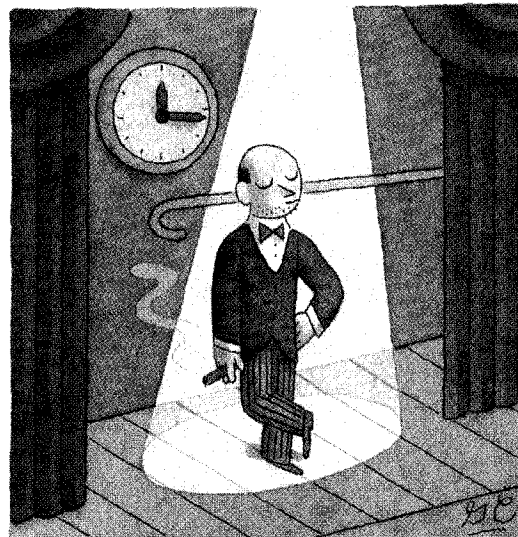
BY CULLEN MURPHY

Last spring a seventy-nine-year-old woman serving on the jury in the case of the alleged Tyco kleptocrats Dennis Kozlowski and Mark Swartz was seen making a motion with her hand that observers interpreted as an “okay” signal being flashed to the defense team. Because this juror—Juror No. 4—was widely believed to be the lone holdout against conviction in the long-deadlocked jury deliberations, a suspicion of jury-tampering seeped into the atmosphere. Then, despite the venerable practice of shielding the identity of jurors, at least until a trial is over, the name of the woman was divulged by the press, and her picture was soon splashed on the front pages of tabloids. Juror No. 4 turned out to be a grandmother and former teacher named Ruth Jordan, who had earned a law degree after retiring from the classroom; and as it happened, her supposed hand signal to the defense was an innocuous gesture, empty of intent. No matter: she was subjected to much scorn, and received a threatening letter. Disturbed about what had happened, the presiding judge declared a mistrial. Kozlowski and Swartz must steel themselves for more of the same (another courtroom, another festival of embarrassing evidence), but for Jordan life will never again be quite normal.

The details may change, but the general circumstances Ruth Jordan faced have an appalling whiff of familiarity about them: an unwitting citizen

is suddenly caught in the pitiless glare of the media, and either can't or won't get out. It is never an edifying sight, and unfortunately, given the way publicity works in America, it is increasingly hard to avoid. A visitor coming fresh to our civilization would remark these squirming figures and take them as a warning, much as anyone approaching a medieval city would have remarked the residue of miscreants on poles and gibbets.

Even the briefest reflection calls to mind scores of recent examples. There is the case of Alexandra Polier, a young woman who once had dinner with Sen-



ator John Kerry and became the focus of baseless rumors about an illicit affair. (“Intrigue surrounds a woman who recently fled the country, reportedly at the prodding of Kerry, the Drudge Report has learned.”)

There is the case of Steve Bartman, the Chicago Cubs fan who during a crucial playoff game last fall reached out for and deflected a foul ball that Chicago's Moises Alou might have been able to catch. The Cubs went on to lose the game, and the playoffs. Bartman, who issued a statement saying he was

“truly sorry from the bottom of this Cubs fan's broken heart,” was nevertheless hounded by ill-wishers. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported, “At one point Wednesday, six police cars were parked outside the Bartman home as reporters crowded the street.”

There is the case of Richard Jewell, the security guard who became a suspect in the bombing at the 1996 Olympic Games, in Atlanta, and whose name was invoked in many media outlets as if a guilty verdict had already been reached. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* pointed out that he fit the profile of a lone bomber: “This profile generally

includes a frustrated white man who is a former police officer, member of the military, or police ‘wannabe’ who seeks to become a hero.” Jewell, the authorities soon established, had nothing to do with the bombing.

Think a little further. There is Fawn Hall, an assistant to the Iran-contra impresario Oliver North, who shredded some papers for her boss and has found herself portrayed ever since as a femme fatale. There is Baby Jessica, the toddler who fell down the

well in Texas and after fifty-eight hours was finally extracted; for chronological bearings, please note that Baby Jessica recently graduated from high school. There is Frank Wills, the security guard who found on a door the telltale piece of duct tape that led to the discovery of the Watergate break-in; and Betty Currie, who was ensnared in the Interngate scandal because, as Bill Clinton's private secretary, she facilitated Monica Lewinsky's comings and goings; and Theresa LePore, who designed Palm Beach County's unfortunate butterfly

50 YEARS AGO IN THE ATLANTIC

"When Russia Is Ready"

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, the question of whether protecting U.S. national security warranted a preventive war was fiercely debated. The question was not new. In the September 1954 Atlantic, Thomas K. Finletter, who had recently served as the Secretary of the Air Force, broached it in a very different context.

The day is about to come when the Russians will have enough bombs and the aircraft with which to deliver them to make a sneak atomic attack on the United States which will destroy our major cities and most of our industry ...

We should assume for the purposes of our national policies and planning that the Russians will reach this absolute point during the year 1956.

The Russians have and always will have one great advantage in the air-atomic race which we cannot take from them. This is the willingness—which they have and we do not—to make a sneak Pearl Harbor-type attack ...

This is why some men think of preventive war. Moral arguments lose their weight in the presence of a simple logic: to live under a threat of obliteration by the Russians, at a time of their choosing, is intolerable. The Russian Communist government is not likely to hesitate to blow us to pieces if it thinks it would advance Russia's interests, nor will the Soviet government be deterred by the possibility of heavy losses in the course of the attack and of our counterattack; it is therefore wrong, immoral, the proponents of preventive war argue, for those whom we have elected to run the United States government to allow the country to be put in such a position; whereas if we should attack the Russians before they get their absolute power we could destroy this threat. Why do we hand the Russians this advantage of being the only ones who would strike first?

The fact is that we are handing the Russians this advantage, and I believe that we shall continue to hand it to them. I do not believe that the present Administration, or its predecessor, or any Administration that will succeed it, would or will make preventive war.

[VOLUME 194, NO. 3, PAGES 29–30]

ballot. Think of George Holliday, the man who filmed the Rodney King beating (think of Rodney King himself). And let's not forget the dressmaker Abraham Zapruder, who serendipitously filmed the Kennedy assassination. Or Ruth Paine, who innocently befriended Lee Harvey Oswald and his wife, and in whose home Oswald stowed his rifle (without Paine's knowledge). The brief acquaintanceship forever altered Paine's life—a story told unforgettably by Thomas Mallon in his book *Mrs. Paine's Garage*.

Taking the long view, one could argue that these sorts of quasi-public figures are essential to the historical process. They stumble into view for a single catalytic purpose. T. S. Eliot's lines in "Prufrock" come to mind: "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be / Am an attendant lord, one that will do / To swell a progress, start a scene or two." It's also true that quasi-public status can be extremely vexing—vexing for the person thrust into the limelight, who wishes it would dim; or vexing for the rest of us, when those who relish the limelight overstay their welcome. As we all know, Andy Warhol predicted that in the future everyone would be famous for fifteen minutes. But finding the best way to handle the sixteenth minute remains a social challenge of the first order.

Could the example of the federal Witness Protection Program offer a possible solution? The program exists to provide a safe haven for people who want to testify in court against wrongdoers but fear for their lives if they do so. Sometimes the witnesses are utter innocents who desire nothing more than to do the right thing and then return to a quiet life. At other times they are malefactors ratting on criminal associates in return for lenient treatment, and will need special handling in prison and afterward. In both instances the aim is to hide their true identities from the general population.

How would an analogous program for the overpublicized work in practice? For those innocents who have stumbled into public view and simply want to stumble out—the Ruth Jordans

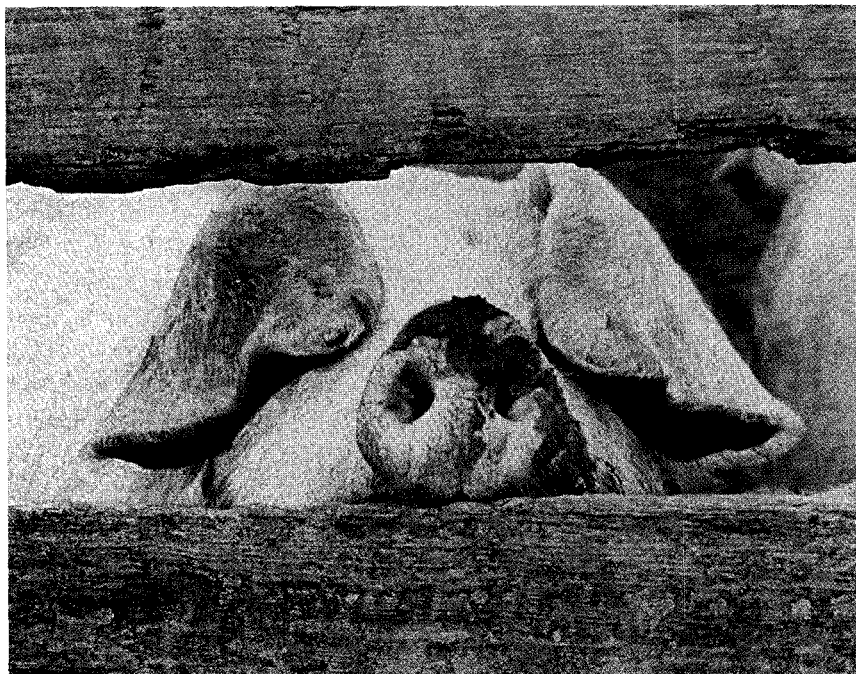
and Steve Bartmans—the program would offer a standard package: relocation, identity change, and modest financial recompense. Further, a private corporation modeled on ASCAP, which handles royalties for popular music, could be set up. Each time a Betty Currie or a Ruth Paine or a George Holliday was mentioned in print or on the air, the "user" would be charged a small fee. Of course, if any of the victims "escaped" back into public view (turning up suddenly with Barbara Walters, say) all bets would be off. The victims would enter Phase II—the Witless Protection Program.

Phase II would be reserved for that class of people—like Kato Kaelin (former O.J. witness/houseguest), Katherine Harris (Florida-recount czarina), Jason Allen Alexander (two-day husband of Britney Spears), and almost anyone emerging from reality television—who find that they cannot voluntarily leave the stage. It would be tempting to remove them forcibly, consign them to some location without media access, and allow plastic surgeons to use them as guinea pigs in refining the emerging technology of face transplantation ("still too risky" for the general public, according to a British scientific journal). But this would have possibly insuperable due-process implications.

A more feasible option is suggested by a growing phenomenon in India, where people have had relatives falsely declared dead in order to seize their property. The practice is so widespread—some 35,000 people have been falsely declared dead in the state of Uttar Pradesh alone—that an advocacy group, the Association of the Living Dead, has been created to work in their behalf. One scholarly definition of "the undead" holds them to be "that class of corporeal beings who at some point were living creatures" and have "come back such that they are not presently 'at rest.'" This definition fits our subjects snugly.

So: why not simply declare Kato, Jason, and all the others dead? Don't think of yourselves as enjoying a sixteenth minute, we'd be saying. Think of it, rather, as the first minute of the rest of your eternity. ▀

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic's managing editor.



FOOD

Principled Pork

"Sustainable farming" is now open to debate and commercial exploitation. But sustainable pork certainly tastes the way pork should

BY CORBY KUMMER

Not long ago I found myself in a New York City hotel room reaching for slice after slice of leftover roast pork. I had brought it with me on the plane after a dinner at Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, held in part to honor Laughing Stock Farm, where the meat had been produced. I had thought at the dinner that this was an exceptionally nice roast, but I'd been distracted by the sight of the turning spit in the kitchen and the many other dishes. Alone in my room, I concentrated fully on what seemed to be a new kind of meat. Its creamy texture and deep flavor were distantly familiar. I wondered which meat it tasted like as I kept eating, enjoying the fat as much as the lean. As the last piece disappeared, I remembered: pork—the kind I had first tasted in Italy, dispensed from roadside trailers in slices on bland, puffy rolls.

When last I wrote about pork, it was the very lean pork the industry had spent decades developing for consumers worried about fat. The cooks I talked to were almost uniformly in despair over

"the other white meat." Bring back the old pork! they cried. After talking with scientists specializing in food safety, I had come up with the seemingly heretical notion of cooking pork pink—to an interior temperature of only about 160°, which keeps in as much flavor and tenderness as the lean meat allows.

Real, full-flavored pork doesn't need to be cooked pink. It can withstand the braising and long roasting that are all but impossible with the other white meat, which requires brines, bacon coats, and other tricks to become palatable. In recent years I have been impressed by the number of restaurants serving pork from Niman Ranch, a northern-California-based company that sells meat from animals raised under humane conditions on relatively small-scale farms in many parts of the country. It's good enough to win people back to pork, and even to risk cooking pork chops—a cut I had given up on. The flavor of Laughing Stock's pork, though, was something else again. I resolved to find out why it tasted so

much better by traveling to the farm, in southern Oregon, and also to visit Iowa—historically pork territory, and home of the farmers who produced the first Niman Ranch pork.

Little of this pork is strictly organic, but it is raised by farmers who pay closer attention than does "Big Pig"—the pork industry—to the long-term well-being of land, water, air, and (though the industry would especially protest this) animals. This approach is loosely referred to as sustainable agriculture. Niman Ranch's farmers and the idealistic owner of Laughing Stock, Paul Atkinson, say that they follow sustainable practices. Their interpretations of what that means mesh but don't quite match.

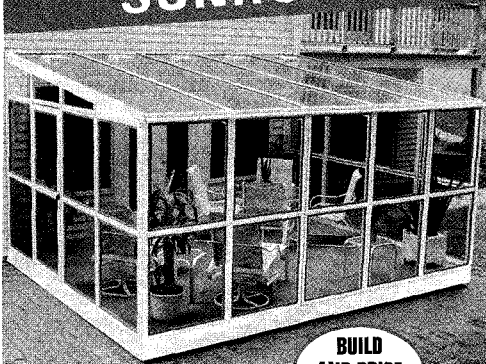
"Sustainable" is the latest of the imprecise do-good terms, like "lowfat" and "natural," at risk of being cynically exploited to the point of irrelevance. Even the hard-won establishment of federal standards to define "organic" has had a not entirely happy result: the marketing of bland organic food grown by conglomerates on huge farms and trucked thousands of miles to chain supermarkets. Any definition of sustainable agriculture takes into account the current and future health of all the species affected by farming—especially the human beings doing it, whose economic as well as physical survival must be assured. Short-term reliance on, say, pesticides that break down naturally can be contemplated. Long-term reliance on fossil-fueled transport cannot.

On meat the "organic" label does guarantee that the animals were not fed animal meal—an important reassurance, given that at this writing no such enforceable prohibition applies to animals raised conventionally in the United States, despite the discovery of mad-cow disease within U.S. borders. But organic meat comes with few guarantees regarding the scale of farming or even animal welfare. My own priority is always fresh food carefully raised by people I can talk to about it.

Paul Atkinson recognizes that no one has defined just what sustainable agriculture is, but he has a clear idea of what it isn't: raising just one kind of

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animal or crop, trucking in feed from afar, and selling to distant markets that require yet more long-haul transport. Atkinson, a compact and trim man with an open, friendly demeanor, grew up on a farm where the goal was economic sustainability. In his parents' case it was unreachable, and his father worked at other jobs to subsidize the farm.

In an effort to realize a profit, Atkinson began making goat cheese from the dairy goats his father had always kept. Throwing out the whey went against his principles, so he bought pigs to feed with it. The animals suited him, he told me when I visited Laughing Stock in its storybook setting of rolling hills. He liked their intelligence and personality. Whey, he discovered, gave pork exceptional flavor—a unique, sweet roundness. (This will not surprise anyone who has tasted Parma hams, which became famous for the pigs' diet—high in whey from Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese making.) Atkinson's pork drew the admiration of a traveling "forager" from Chez Panisse, who tasted it at a Eugene meat market and was soon ordering as much as the farm could produce. Pigs paid, cheese didn't.

Atkinson led me to his barns, where there were goats, a few cows, and two sows who had given birth just the night before to about a dozen piglets each. The farrowing sows had been moved to fenced-off enclosures with extra-deep straw and special light bulbs to keep them warm. They lumbered toward Atkinson, whom they clearly recognized, and nuzzled both of us. The enclosure smelled of warm straw and the wet loam of early spring. I expected to look up and find a web spelling out "Some Pig!"

This idyllic scene is possible because Atkinson keeps his operation on such a small scale. He buys his feed from grain growers as close to his farm as he can find, willingly paying a higher price in the knowledge that it will help his neighbors stay in business. Once he can ensure a steady supply of whey from the nearby Springfield Creamery (a large dairy that supplies Nancy's Yogurt, a brand of tart yogurt I seek out), he will enlist neighboring farmers to raise hogs following his advice, and sell them under the Laughing Stock name.

ANSWERS TO THE JULY/AUGUST PUZZLER

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Across. 1. COMPUTERSE (anag.) 12. ST(OR + MC)ELLAR 14. TES + L + A (rev.) 16. COVE + T 17. LYRES (hidden) 18. ODER (homophone) 19. DNA (rev.) 21. RIME (homophone) 23. ORR (first letters) 25. A + G + A 27. INTERNECINE (anag.) 28. STU (homophone) 29. SM(ILE) (rev.) 30. NAP (rev.) 37. NAT + URAL (tan rev.) 38. ST(A)Y 39. TEE (homophone) 40. PU + R + L (rev.) *Down.* 1. G + O + SEC 2. ORTHODONTIST (anag.) 3. MOO(n) 4. P(ART + ER)RES 5. UN + MET 6. TUCSON (anag.) 7. E + WELL 8. RELAY RACE (anag.) 9. EEL (rev.) 10. S + T(A + GEM)ANAGER 11. EAR(L)S 13. OVERT + URN 15. OR(I + CIN)AL 19. DO + RM 20. A + BEL 22. GTS + MOS 24. ANT (hidden) 26. REPEAL (pun) 32. (g)RAY 33. O + T + T 34. RUE (homophone) 35. I + RE 36. MA + P

Raising pigs has always been a way to keep a farm sustainable, because they are woven into the entire farm system. Like chickens, they provide a profitable recycling method, eating many kinds of waste. As with all systems, problems come from imbalance; with hogs the notorious problems are pollution and odor. Atkinson begins composting pig manure with various kinds of straw on his barn floor, and spreads the compost on pastures that grow grain for cattle, not vegetables for his family. Industrial hog farmers spray raw manure directly onto fields; its high phosphorus and nitrogen content can burn land, leaving the soil infertile. And they dump huge "lagoons" of manure into tanks whose contents often leak into groundwater. Emulating careful farmers everywhere, Atkinson rotates pastures so that pigs graze on them one year out of five. This, of course, is not a realistic possibility for the pork industry.

I hoped to get inside Big Pig and see for myself one of the "confinement buildings" that arouse the ire of neighbors, environmentalists, and animal-rights activists. The Iowa farmers who warned me it wouldn't happen were right. Too short notice, several large companies told me. Biosecurity, said another, asking if I had been on a farm in the past two weeks; pigs living so close together have stressed and often weakened immune systems, which require steady prophylactic doses of antibiotics. Industrial pig farming has been "so misrepresented," Bruce Rastetter, an owner of Heartland Pork, one of the two largest "integrators" (pork producers) in the state, told me when dismissing my request to visit. "We feel we haven't been treated fairly. I grew up on a small farm; I have no problem contrasting, knowing we produce a significantly healthier product than what we grew up on as kids."

I did drive through the "heart of pig," as Neil Hamilton, a professor in charge of the Agricultural Law Center at Drake University, and a fourth-generation Iowa farmer, calls a stretch of Highway 69 south of Mason City. In one square mile there are 24,000 pigs. It was evening, and the

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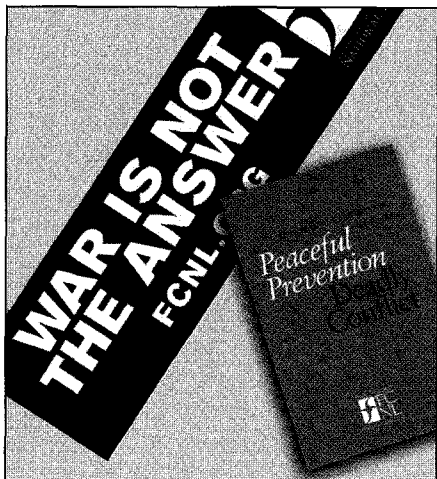
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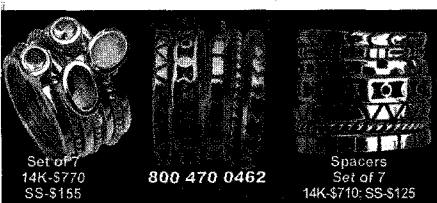
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long aluminum-sided barns, their white roofs topped with runway-style amber lights, glowed eerily. I rolled down my windows but smelled only the normal odors of a pig farm—perhaps because the weather wasn't very warm, perhaps because the buildings were closed, with doors only at the ends. Near the ground on each side were three large white ventilator fans, looking like ship's fans. The green of the siding suggested a hospital. The overhead lights and muddy flats between the silent, windowless buildings suggested a concentration camp.

I was able to imagine, if remotely, that the guidelines of the Pork Board's Swine Welfare Assurance Program (in which participation is voluntary) were being followed to the letter inside; that the pigs got plenty of feed they liked (albeit laced with prophylactic drugs); that sick animals were noticed and either treated or removed and euthanized, as the Pork Board puts it; that the concrete floors over latrine canals, with open slits to allow drainage, left the pigs feeling dry and well tended. "We raised pigs on mud lots," Hamilton told me. "Hell, if you were a pig you might just as soon be inside lying on concrete than in mud up to your knees."

But I was not able to imagine that these big barns could do much good for the environment, not to mention the neighbors. Indeed, Hamilton explained to me over a bacon-and-mushroom omelet the next morning, communities have little say in whether a landowner can build big barns. "Right to farm" laws, designed to shield Iowa farmers from nuisance suits, effectively eliminate county review and approval of new farms. "The first way you might know that a hog operation is going up," he said, "is cement trucks pouring footings." Production on this scale is a recent arrival in Iowa, in contrast to, say, North Carolina, where high pork production was developed by an oligarchy.

In the past, Hamilton said, Iowa family farms raised pigs in sustainable ways without even trying. But in the past ten years they have had to choose between raising large numbers of pigs under contract or getting out of the pork business. The contracting companies might be headquartered in North

Carolina or New York City, and have little economic loyalty to the state. They own the pigs, but the farmer builds the barns and assumes liability for any violation of environmental laws. In 1970 Iowa produced 20 million pigs, about a quarter of the country's annual production, on 91,000 farms. In 2002 the state produced 27 million pigs—on 10,000 farms.

Niman Ranch is providing an alternative in Iowa and elsewhere—one that puts economic sustainability for small farms first. It guarantees a minimum price per hog to farmers who meet its standards, usually 15 to 20 percent above the market average. The more than 300 farmers in twelve states who raise pigs sold by Niman agree to raise other kinds of animals and crops along with pigs, to rotate pastures, and to limit the amount of pig manure they put on fields. Although less than one percent of its farms are certified organic, Niman Ranch sells no animals that have been given antibiotics, and forbids the use of animal products in feed. It also mandates adherence to strict rules from the Animal Welfare Institute, which require time spent either in pastures or in straw-bedded pens. Niman does not dictate breeds, but practically by definition its farmers raise breeds different from the ones integrators use, which are too lean to survive outdoors. The increased body fat results in increased flavor, and in the general celebration of chefs.

In 1994 Paul and Phyllis Willis, both from multi-generational Iowa farming families, volunteered to be Niman Ranch's first pork-producing partners. When I visited the genial, welcoming Willises in Thornton, a small town near Mason City, a few hundred pigs surrounded the square brick farmhouse they have turned into their company headquarters. About a dozen sows had just farrowed, and they snuggled with their piglets in little Quonset huts. Even if the endless-horizon scenery on the Willis farm was less enchanting than Laughing Stock's emerald rolling hills, the scene was nearly as idyllic.

Criteria for joining Niman Ranch center mainly on feed and humane living conditions. But taste is high on

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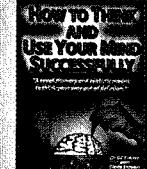
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the list too, as a freshly used broiler pan attested when I entered the office through the kitchen. Farmers must pass the pork-chop test: the Willises and an associate in charge of product quality cook and taste a sample chop, deeming it either sufficiently juicy and tender or not quite ready for the Niman label. Restaurants around the country list Niman Ranch pork like a badge of honor. Demand is now twice the available supply, Paul Willis told me, and growth is limited mostly by the dwindling number of family farms.

Hamilton compares Niman Ranch to Fair Trade—an umbrella group that makes sure farmers get their full share of selling prices and encourages consumers to pay a premium for responsibly raised food. While sustainability awaits a firm (and no doubt exploitable) definition, Niman Ranch is offering a model that is responsible to farmers, the environment, and diners—a sustainable model of sustainability.

Even with the addition of whey-sweetened and acorn-finished pigs from neighboring farms, Laughing Stock Farm's pork will remain reserved for Oregonians and visitors to Chez Panisse. However grateful he is to the restaurant for putting him on the map, Atkinson is frustrated by selling exclusively to a place that's 400 miles away, because it goes against many of his principles. Niman Ranch pork is available by mail order (nimanranch.com), so you can conveniently taste the difference between it and typical pork. Bacon is always the easy way to go, and Niman Ranch bacon is particularly good. The surest test, though, is a cut that ought to do well with long low cooking (but seldom does), such as shoulder—the kind of cut still popular in Europe, where pigs at slaughter are nearly twice the weight they are here, and have that much more fat and flavor.

Marcella Hazan, who has done much to awaken American palates to simple and true flavors, offers a recipe in her new *Marcella Says ...* for pork shoulder braised with tomatoes, onions, and black-eyed peas. (In *All About Braising*, another new book, Molly Stevens devotes a whole chapter to pork.) The

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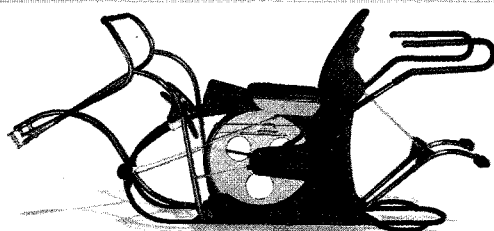
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cooking time—at least two hours—requires meat high in collagen, with well-exercised muscle and an agreeably strong flavor. Niman Ranch pork should meet the challenge.

To serve four people, buy two pounds of pork shoulder with the bone in, and cut the meat into two-inch cubes. Cover one and a half cups of dried black-eyed peas with abundant warm water and soak them for two to three hours. Heat three tablespoons of olive oil in a low saucepan over high heat. Brown the meat on one side, putting in only as many pieces at a time as will fit easily. Turn the pieces to brown the other side, and then transfer them to a bowl using tongs or a slotted spoon. In the same pan put two and a half cups of onion, sliced very thin, and a sprinkling of salt. Lower the heat and cook the onions until they are very soft, about thirty minutes, turning occasionally. Return the meat and any juices to the pan. Add chopped dried Italian red chili pepper and salt to taste, two thirds of a cup of dry white wine, two garlic cloves peeled and sliced very thin, and one cup of chopped tomatoes with their juice or the same amount of canned imported San Marzano tomatoes. Cover the pan and cook over very low heat for at least two hours. Turn the meat from time to time, and add a few tablespoons of water if the juices seem to be running low.

While the meat is cooking, drain and rinse the peas and put them into another saucepan with water to cover by about two inches. Add a teaspoon of salt and two teaspoons of olive oil and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to a very gentle simmer and cover the pan. Cook until completely tender, about forty-five minutes. When the peas are done, drain them and add them to the stew, stirring once or twice. Continue to cook at low heat for at least fifteen minutes, or until the meat feels very tender when tested with a knife or fork. Serve at once on a warm platter. The meat should be chewy yet tender, with an authoritative flavor that rises beyond even the tomato and chili—the round, forgotten flavor of pork. ■

Corby Kummer, a senior editor of The Atlantic, is the author of The Pleasures of Slow Food (2002) and The Joy of Coffee (revised 2003).

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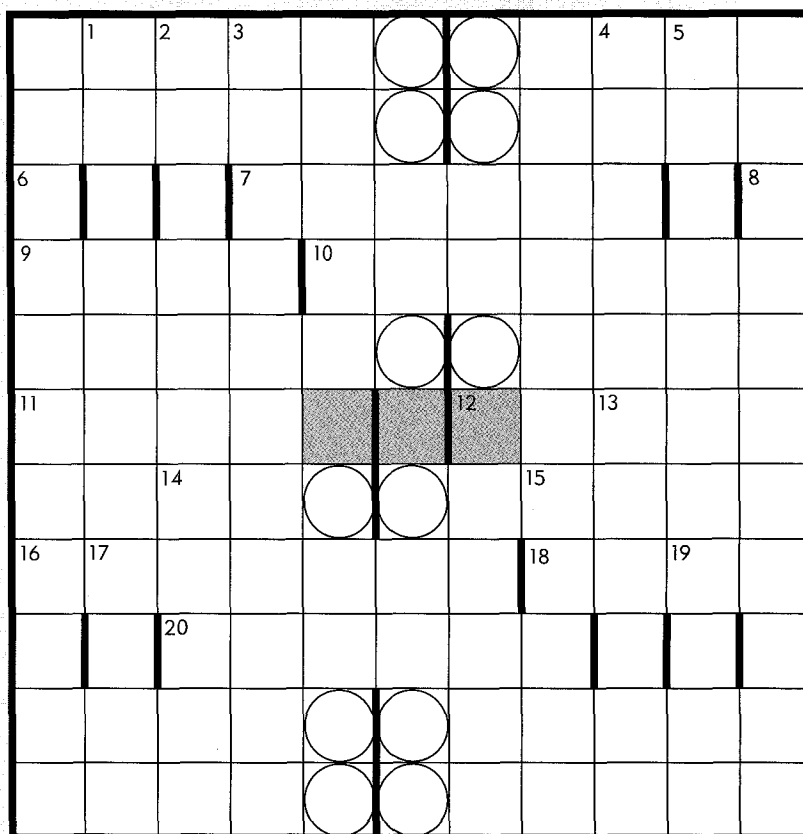
THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Chain Links

Two unclued 11-letter Downs meander in unbroken chains from top to bottom, moving straight down or diagonally down (either left or right), one row at a time. They share no letters with the clued Downs, which are entered normally, though without heavy bars to show where they begin and end. All Across answers are entered normally, but twelve of them are clued in random order as "Links." Each of these either begins or ends in a circle. Circled letters match up in a certain way so as to form links between the two chains; the matching letters provide a key to a code belonging in the three shaded squares. Once the chains are located with the help of the links, solvers who trace their paths will see two 11-letter terms for both the chains and their links. This information should enable solvers to complete the three-letter sequence in the center. Twelve clue answers are capitalized; 20 Across is not common.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 154.



LINKS

- a. Tease about unknown in between (5)
- b. Drink from a fountain on a Mediterranean island (5)
- c. Geoffrey is given time to finish work (3,3)
- d. Subject for movie (5)
- e. Block most of the blemish (6)
- f. Publicly defend stocking Scottish river (5)
- g. Crazy about old tapioca source (6)
- h. A quiet drive into Hindu community (6)
- i. Some North African people are in drag (6)
- j. Dread flying gnats (5)
- k. Stigmatize Turkey's leader and German chancellor (6)
- l. Fellow skirting long, large ditch (5)

ACROSS

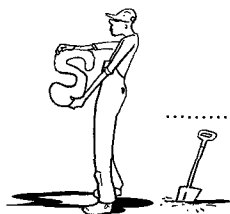
7. A cough troubled cowboy (6)
9. Winner of a Pulitzer and a thousand-dollar bill (4)
10. Warn American about British province (7)
11. Council's turf encompassing New York westward (5)
12. Stand back behind a pantheon (5)
16. Taught English, passed with condition (7)
18. French river's nameless sound (4)
20. Pass more ancient tract of reclaimed land (6)

DOWN

1. Called citrus fruit "peeled" (4)
2. Article on department head from a South American region (6)

3. Reign poorly in African land (5)
4. Thanksgiving's full of carnage, with all ultimately eaten (5)
5. Small, illuminated, narrow opening (4)
6. Some cricket players mysteriously absent around noon (7)
8. Returned hardened concrete for Ophelia's brother (7)
13. Bother splitting pinch of seasoning or salt (6)
14. Painter's impudent to an audience (5)
15. Throw off account (5)
17. Poor method of operating vessel (4)
19. Unlimited use of one place to sit (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

CHRIS WOOD, of East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, writes, "I am irked by sports media's pretentious use of *RBI* in speech and writing, to describe more than one run batted in. Though it is in dictionaries, I find it unnatural, since the initials assume the entire meaning of the term and should allow for an *s* at the end. More tolerable is a similar practice in the realm of hard news, as when Tom Brokaw or Wolf Blitzer utters the plural *WMD* ('weapons of mass destruction'). But why not pluralize all abbreviations at the end? If you are going to acknowledge construction and etymology, why not be completely asinine and call the things *RsBI*?"

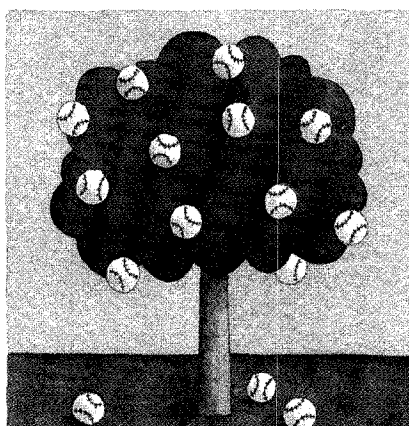
Our conventions for pluralizing initialisms are an absolute mess. Some dictionaries give both *RBI*s and *RBI*s as plural forms of *RBI*. (*The New Oxford American Dictionary* also gives *ribbies* as an informal equivalent.) *RBI*s is the plural most commonly seen in print. Still, some major newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*—which maybe you think of as pretentious?—and also smaller ones, such as the *Akron* (Ohio) *Beacon Journal* and the *Corpus Christi* (Texas) *Caller-Times*, use *RBI* (or *R.B.I.*) whether they're describing one or a hundred runs batted in.

The national-desk copy chief of *The Washington Post*, Bill Walsh, disapproves of this style decision, though, despite what his paper's sports desk does. In his book *Lapsing Into a Comma*, Walsh wrote, "Three *RBI*? Is that like *three POW*? It's silly, if well intentioned, to try to apply this kind of internal logic once you've switched from a spelled-out term to an initialism. The plural of an initialism is the initialism plus *s*. *Prisoner of war/prisoners of war*, but *POW/POWs*. *Run batted in/runs batted in*, but *RBI/RBI*s."

That makes sense to me, so I thought I'd consult Walsh about *WMD* versus *WMDs*—and, while I was at it, *FAQ*

versus *FAQs*, for "frequently asked questions." This last term is a bit different, because in the spelled-out version the *s* does come at the end. The evolving convention is nonetheless to call a list of questions *an FAQ*.

Walsh told me, "I try to avoid *WMD* outside quotations, but I think it's clear that the plural should be *WMDs*, following the *POWs* principle. *FAQ* strikes me as a singular noun, even though it stands for a plural concept. *An FAQ* (or *a FAQ*, for those who pronounce it 'fack') really



means 'a list of frequently asked questions,' not 'a frequently asked questions.'" Very true. Walsh's thoughts about how to treat the plurals of initialisms amount to as sensible a set of principles as you'll find.

NITISH JHA, of Pretoria, South Africa, writes, "English is my first language, so you can imagine my shock and indignation when a French colleague told me that I was using the word *orchard* incorrectly. Apparently, the word *orchard* is used in conjunction with non-citrus fruit, whereas for citrus fruit one must use the word *grove*. Thus we have *apple* or *guava* or *mango orchard* but *orange grove* and *lemon grove*. None of the dictionaries I consulted gave a reason for this distinction. For that matter, not all of them even made this distinction explicit. I am looking for an expla-

nation of why such a difference exists, if indeed it does. Can you help?"

I thought it was their own language the French were picky about! I checked fourteen English usage manuals (more than dictionaries, these specialize in drawing fine distinctions) and two dictionaries of synonyms for you. The only book to list either *orchard* or *grove* was Richard Soule's 1938 *Dictionary of English Synonyms and Synonymous Expressions*, with an entry for *grove* that reads, "Wood, woodland, thicket, copse. See FOREST." Hmmm.

I also checked databases of recent English-language newspaper articles in the United States and elsewhere. Throughout the English-speaking world *citrus grove*, *orange grove*, and *lemon grove* are indeed seen far more often than *citrus orchard*, etc. And *apple orchard* is seen far more often than *apple grove*. Evidently, newspapers seldom have occasion to mention *guava groves* or *guava orchards*, but when they do, the more common phrase is, as you say, *guava orchard*.

Curiously, though (and contradicting your French colleague's idea that groves produce only citrus fruit), American newspapers use the phrase *mango grove* more often than they do *mango orchard*. However, non-U.S. papers use *mango orchard* more often. But hardly anyone anywhere in the world writes *olive orchard*; *olive grove* is far more common.

In sum, there is no hard-and-fast rule about which word to use for stands of fruit trees. Both *orchard* and *grove* come to us from Old English, so there isn't even any sense in trying to impose a geographic distinction, as the finicky among us might amuse ourselves by doing with *woods* (which comes to us from Old English) and *forest* (from Old French).

Do you have a language dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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The Lord's Music and the Devil's Words

Ray Charles (1930–2004)

BY MARK STEYN

Somewhere along the way in his vast autobiography, among all the name-checking, wonkery, and self-exculpation, Bill Clinton remarks, "I had loved Ray Charles since I heard his great line from 'What'd I Say': 'Tell your mama, tell your pa, I'm gonna send you back to Arkansas.'"

It is a great line. Like Hoagy Carmichael, the composer of "Georgia on My Mind," Ray Charles had a natural affinity for the lie of the land: his voice could embrace the purple-mountained uplift of "America the Beautiful" and ramble slyly through back roads and shantytowns, too. At sixteen he was singing with an all-white hillbilly band called the Florida Playboys. At eighteen he decided he'd gone as far as he could in the Sunshine State, unrolled a map of the country, pinpointed the town that was kitty-corner to Tampa, and then got on a bus to Seattle, where he formed his own Nat Cole-style trio.

Likewise, wherever you are on the musical map, he's there too. He was, said Frank Sinatra, "the only genius in our business," and Ray wasn't minded to disagree, putting it right up there in the LP title: *The Genius of Ray Charles*. At the Stax Museum of American Soul Music, in Memphis, he explains in the introductory video to the official tour that soul is what happens when church, blues, and country are "all intertwined some kind of way." On album covers he spelled out the relevant formula more mathematically: *Genius + Soul = Jazz*. Plus he was a little bit country, he was a little bit rock-and-roll. He was a rare literal rocker, rocking back and forth at the piano as he sang Lennon & McCartney. But he rocked to Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein, too. From Stephen Foster to Stevie Wonder, he claimed a century of American commercial song as his personal archive, and then added

hymns and spirituals. He did *Hee Haw* and *Porgy and Bess*, and acquitted himself well on both. And in the ultimate act of boundary-breaking, he did jingles for both Coke and Pepsi.

There are many category enforcers in the complicated apartheid of popular music who don't care for the above: like the stock clerk at Coconuts, a lot of critics want to know which bin to file you in. And when it's not that simple, they doubt your motives: Genius + Orchestra = Sellout. But the doubters have a point. There's a name for this kind of behavior, and Ray Charles used it when he started his own record label, in the 1970s: Crossover. "Crossover" used to refer to when a fellow in a specialist genre ("race records") crossed over to the main Top 40; then it somehow got stood on its head to mean a great artist's condescending to a vernacular genre: José Carreras strangulating the vowels and mangling the consonants of "As Time Goes By"—"de worl weel ohl-wez welcomm loafers" rendered with all the passion of a sales exec addressing a footwear convention.

But even when it's not that bad, it's not that good. In the 1950s, on "If I Were a Bell" (from *Guys and Dolls*) and a hundred others, Dinah Washington managed to signal through all the orchestral bounce that she'd still rather be singing the blues. A decade later, when Columbia leaned on him to do an album called *Tony Sings the Great Hits of Today*, Tony Bennett was so disgusted with himself for doing a lot of lame soft-rock covers that he was physically sick before the session: Tony Bennett pukes the great songs of today. Even if the stuff doesn't make you vomit, a guy who does everything comes over like an opportunist (Ray Charles, old buddy Quincy Jones) or a poseur (Elvis Costello, who, after avant-

garde string quartets and Burt Bacharach, now seems to be doing to the career of his wife, Diana Krall, what he did to his own).

In considering Ray Charles, Sinatra's advice to Tony Bennett seems more germane: "You can only be yourself. But you're good at that." Ray was sixteen when he cut his first songs, on a friend's wire recorder, and he was already good at being himself. The trio is in conventional style for the late 1940s, but the sixteen-year-old voice is moaning the blues like a sixty-year-old.

By then young Ray had gone through more in his brief life than most of us would want to bear in our threescore and ten. He was born in Albany, Georgia, in 1930, the same year "Georgia on My Mind" was published. His father was gone, and his mother eventually moved her children across the state line to Florida. One day the five-year-old Ray was playing outside in the washtub with his little brother when the younger boy's clothes got waterlogged and he went under. Instead of running inside immediately and getting his mom, Ray struggled to pull his brother out; by the time he realized he couldn't and went for help, it was too late. At seven he went blind. When he was fourteen, his mother, barely thirty herself, died suddenly in her sleep. She had raised her children in poverty so extreme that "even the blacks looked down on us," as Charles once told me. "Going down the ladder, you had rich whites, poor blacks, then us. And there weren't nothing between us and the bottom."

On the other hand, even singing hillbilly with the Florida Playboys, the teenage Ray Charles already seemed like a man who transcended the facts of his life. When he'd lost his sight, his mother had sent him to the state school for the blind in Saint Augustine. It had a white section and a colored section, and even at the time Ray thought it "kinda weird" that white kids and colored kids who couldn't see which was which nevertheless had to be segregated on that basis. "Ain't that a bitch," he said.

You wonder what other segregations make less sense to those who can't see them. Almost as soon as he



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hit the big time, critics complained that he'd sold out—when he left Atlantic Records, when he got a string section, sang country, went Hollywood, did show tunes. But isn't a lot of that prejudice to do with the externals—the orchestra's tuxedos, the Nashville cowboy getups, a suburban concert hall filled with middle-class white folks? If you can't see any of that, all you can hear, as Ray Charles heard growing up, is the music. "Take Artie Shaw," he said. "I didn't even know he was white."

In those early days with the trio in Seattle, Charles was trying to sound like Nat Cole, and it didn't work. But other than that, whatever he did sounded like Ray Charles. On "Makin' Whoopee," Dinah Washington's blues inflections and harmonic variations seem unconnected to the material; Charles dropped it several socioeconomic notches below Eddie Cantor, did it low-down and confessional, and wrung every last drop of rueful comic juice from it. On "Eleanor Rigby" the queasy Tony Bennett

was so intimidated by the mournful formality of the Beatles original that he declaimed it like a poem he'd been forced to learn for school; Charles's version is tough and personal, up closer to the characters than the Fab Four got. He understood how to find his sound in the most familiar song. The obvious example is "Georgia," which he'd sung for ages in the back of his car to and from gigs until his driver prevailed on him to record it. Hoagy Carmichael and his college roommate, Stu Gorrell, had written it thirty years earlier, and Mildred Bailey did a lovely, warm, sweet record of it. But Charles changed the song. All that soul and all that ache—"The road leads back to yooooooooo" at

the end of the bridge, and then that falsetto back into the final eight. After Ray Charles you couldn't glide through it the way thirties crooners used to.

He was cool in all genres, and funny in most of them too. He appropriated the music of faith and deployed it in the service of romance: "Talkin' 'Bout Jesus" became "Talkin' 'Bout You"; "This Little Light of Mine" became "This Little Girl of Mine." "He took the Lord's music and the devil's words and made this amalgam they call soul music," said Jerry Wexler, his producer at Atlantic Records. He added strings to soul, and then did a country album in it.

Was he a nice fellow? Well, you hear the usual stories about stars, and the only difference was that Ray told some of them himself. For his girl group he ran a well-worn casting couch. "You can't be a Raelette unless you let Ray," he'd say with a chuckle. For the first two decades of his career he was a heroin addict, and because he was blind, he required others to shoot him up—a

small operational detail that somehow magnifies the self-degradation. For the last two decades the genius coasted on way too many celebrity duets and on synth-pop boilerplate. "I don't mind the women," a colleague of his said to me. "But he's cheating on the music."

He made two great jazz albums: one instrumental (Charles on Hammond organ with Basie sidemen) and one vocal, with Betty Carter. The second was an instant classic, and promptly went out of print. I had a Japanese LP of it that I used to play all the time in my disc-jockey days. The engineer saw "Alone Together" on the running order late one night and groaned, "God, I hate that song." I played Ray and Betty's version—two idiosyncratic voices matched perfectly, close-miked, slow and conversational, intense and intimate, the opposite of that raw abandon Charles has on most of his big hits. It's as if they're sprawled on the rug in the dark at the end of a long evening. "Wow," the engineer said at the end. "Now I get it."

Most of us get Ray Charles at some point in our lives. "What'd I Say" didn't feel like a big deal at the time," said Tom Dowd, his engineer at Atlantic. "Ray, the gals, and the band live in the small studio, no overdubs. Next!" In pop there's always something next. You move on, and yesterday's hot groove is stone-cold. But forty years on, the party-crowd call-and-response can still "make you feel so good right now." My favorite Ray Charles album cover is his obligatory Christmas record. It's a big snowbound field in the middle of the woods, with one horse and an open sleigh and, standing on the sleigh holding the reins, a grinning blind man in a slick striped tux, blue shirt, and big bow tie, ready to go dashing through the snow on the wildest ride of all. That's the man in a single image: stick him in the middle of anything, and he still comes up Ray Charles. ▀

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